

TOP STORY: Clinton's environmental scorecard

May 17-30, 1993

In THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

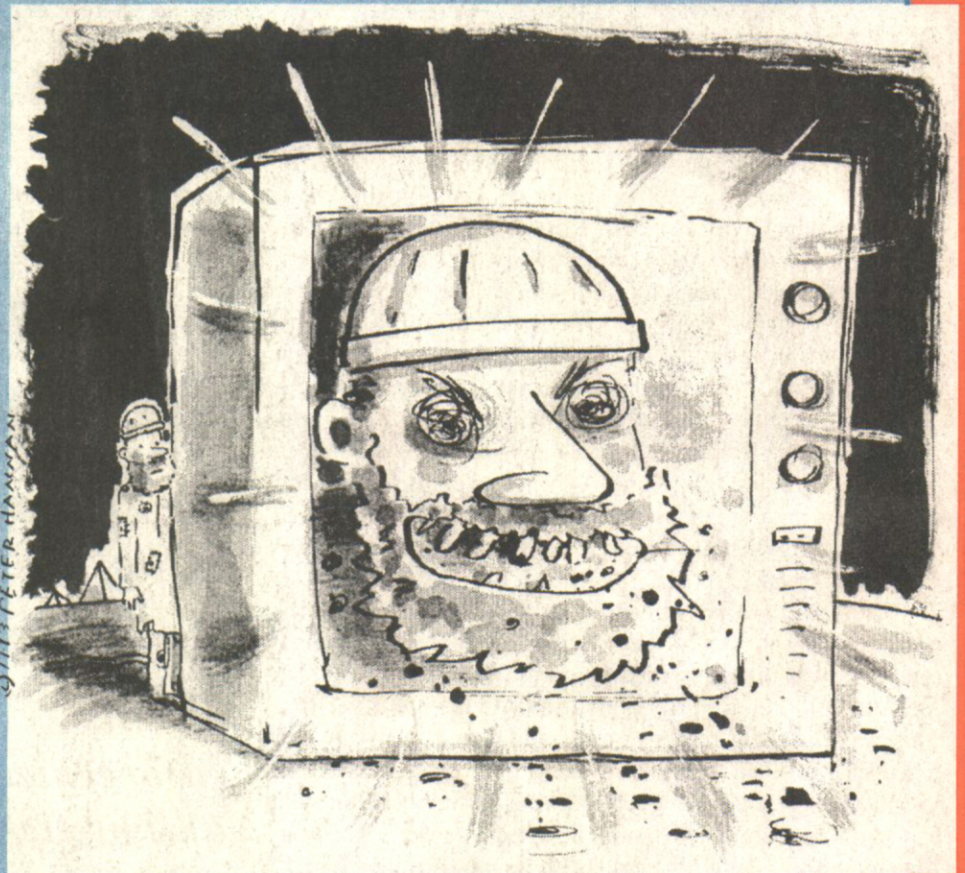
"It's hard to find an issue in which Clinton hasn't buckled under to the CEOs and bankers who financed his campaign."

PAGE 14

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FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS



Why the West misunderstands Islamic violence in the Mideast

James North

EDITORIAL

IN THE FBI, DAVID KORESH MET HIS MATCH

In provoking the slaughter of 78 members of the Branch Davidian sect on April 19, the FBI fulfilled David Koresh's prophecy of Armageddon. Trained to resist an assault by a hostile government, Koresh and his followers got what they expected, not what they deserved.

As a few more thoughtful commentators on the Waco conflagration have observed, Koresh's alienation and his core millenarian doctrines are shared by millions of Americans searching for meaning in a world that seems to have lost its moorings. Many of today's fundamentalists—religious as well as political, throughout the world—seek what Koresh offered: the security that comes from possessing a sense of certainty within a longstanding religious tradition. Like the Rev. Jim Jones, who led his cult to suicide in Guyana 15 years ago, Koresh's beliefs were offensive and his actions incomprehensible. But the only threat he offered to the larger society was the distorted image of itself that his Mount Carmel reflected.

Clearly, Koresh's treatment of his followers, especially the children, was brutal as well as illegal. And his arsenal of weapons was of legitimate concern to officials of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF)—who say that this was the main reason for the initial raid in which four agents were killed. But there was no need for the disastrous assault. Koresh had not been in hiding in the weeks leading up to the first attack. He could have been arrested when out jogging or on one of his frequent shopping trips into Waco.

The ATF, however, was out for glory. Eager to crush this man who, according to the bureau's affidavits, espoused "certain doctrines hostile to law enforcement," they wanted to make a show of strength. So, with unsurprising ineptitude, they notified the media in advance and then attacked on a Sunday morning in the belief that the Davidians, who as a branch of the Seventh Day Adventists observe the Sab-

bath on Saturday, would be busy worshipping.

From there on, the story unfolded in what Martin Walker, writing in Britain's *Guardian*, called "an American pathology"—a cult of overarmed zealots being crushed by a state that also defines itself in terms of firepower.

Consider Waco in the light of the 1985 Philadelphia bombing of the headquarters for MOVE, a group of well-armed African-American militants. That group, threatened with eviction from a row house for defiance of city health codes, refused to leave. So the police surrounded the house and a day-long battle ensued. When this siege failed to dislodge the group, Mayor Wilson Goode approved the dropping of explosives onto the roof of the building. You know the rest: a fire started, six MOVE adults and five children were burned to death and an entire city block went up in flames, leaving 250

people homeless. No charges were ever brought against city or police officials.

Or consider Waco in the light of the siege of the Symbionese Liberation Army in Los Angeles in 1974. In that triumph of law and order, a group of '60s radicals who had kidnapped and temporarily converted newspaper heiress Patty Hearst were wiped out in another fire following an hour-long gun battle.

In all three cases, it was not the magnitude of the crime that caused the deranged response from those in charge.

Koresh's real crime, the FBI says, is that he thumbed his nose at law enforcement authorities.

Rather, as the assistant director of the FBI's criminal division explained, it was that "these people had thumbed their noses at law enforcement." This is a domestic version of Ronald Reagan's invasion of Grenada for thumbing its nose at the White House or George Bush's attack of Panama for Manuel Noriega's failure to toe the Washington line. Such actions reveal the moral bankruptcy of those who govern us.

The solution to our problems, domestic or international, does not lie in continued militarization and escalating levels of punishment for crime. People like Koresh should be arrested, but the longer our country is dominated by those who put more faith in raw force than in building a just society, the more Koresches we will create. ◀

IN THESE TIMES

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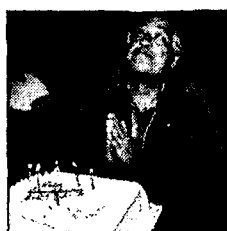
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LETTERS

A hit

I just wanted to compliment you on your editorial (ITT, April 5) about "Israeli apartheid" concerning the Palestinians.

It was a fine summary of the tragedy that began in 1948 and continues today—and the terrible cost it exacts on all sides. And your concluding statements about U.S. foreign aid helping this oppression continue were right on target.

I hope more readers get to see your publication, let alone this editorial. Keep up the fine work.

Casey Kasem
Los Angeles

Shrinking universe

In "Help yourself" (ITT, April 5), David Futrelle inaccurately asserts that the author of *I'm Dysfunctional-You're Dysfunctional*, Wendy Kaminer, believes that those who seek help from

the psychiatric/psychological industry display "cowardice or dependency." Cheap shot, Mr. Futrelle. More accurately, Kaminer has demonstrated the absurdity of current psychobabble and its deleterious ramifications in our political realm and its insidious effects on our moral character.

To the extent that she attempts to analyze the weaknesses of psychology as a whole, Kaminer hardly breaks new ground. To be sure, psychology is useful to advertisers and others seeking to tap into shifting consumer sentiments. As a bedrock of understanding of human nature and a basis to understanding our existence, it is like shifting sand and hence unreliable.

As a fellow past sufferer of debilitating depression who has been close to many who suffer from bipolar depression, mania, etc., I feel as subjectively qualified as Futrelle to comment on the mental health industry. I would assert that it is an objective system of beliefs that encompasses spirituality and consistently bears truth in applications

over time that will provide real hope to those suffering psychologically and/or spiritually.

That lack of inclusion of that which is spiritual, and potentially divine, is the crumbling weakness of psychology and psychiatry. That the popular press is just beginning to re-examine this possibility is noteworthy. I, for one, welcome it.

Davis Staab
Levelgreen, Pa

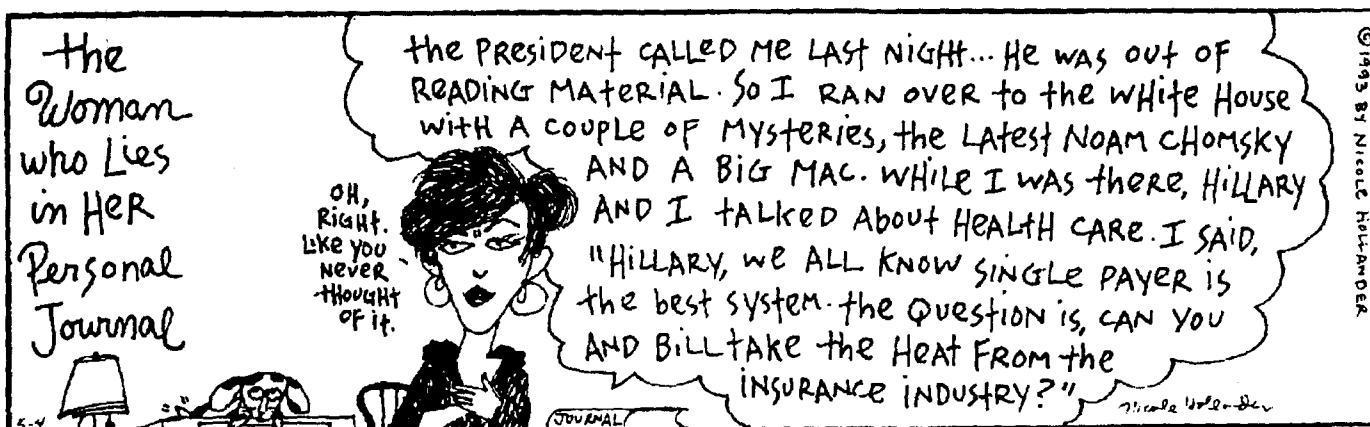
David Futrelle replies: The charge of "inaccuracy" is inaccurate. In the conclusion of her book, Kaminer writes that "merely buying a self-help book is an act of dependence, a refusal to confront the complexities of a solitary creative act and to endure the loneliness and failures that are the price of its surprises." Like much of her book, the passage is eloquent, impassioned and hopelessly muddled.

Change and short change

There is little doubt that, as Miles Harvey writes (ITT, April 19), we will never get real health care reform (or any other real reform without addressing and coming up with a policy of actual campaign finance reform. The American people are being held hostage by megabucks. The government "of the people, by the people, and for the people" has metamor-

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



phosed to a government "of the money, by the money, and for the money." Without *real* democratic campaign finance reform, the fact that money begets money and then becomes the be-all and end-all (as an acceptable national policy) certainly means the situation can only deteriorate and any semblance of democracy will vanish from our borders.

Polls have shown that 70 percent of the American people favor the single-payer health care system. (Have you ever heard of a Canadian crying out for "managed competition"?) Nonetheless, politics seem to dictate that the Clinton administration is either unwilling or unable to confront the enormous wealth of the health care providers. Whatever happened to the people?

Ira Magaziner, the White House aide on health care, stated in a meeting that Clinton ran on managed competition and won. "The public has spoken." Firstly, managed competition was an 11th-hour arrival in the campaign (after apparent promises of single-payer while campaigning in New Hampshire and the later "play-or-pay"). Secondly, to quote James Carville, managed competition is a concept "no person has ever heard of." Most people, including myself, voted for Bill Clinton because he gave us the hope of change. Managed competition is not change—it's the health care provider's version of the shell game.

The longer that money remains the driving force in campaigning (and thus, the political process), the further we will retreat from a representative form of government and, of course, the farther we will be from *real* health care reform.

Dick Moork
Seattle

Cuba si!

Now that ex-President Jimmy Carter has urged a restoration of travel and trade with Cuba, we hope the media will end its self-imposed black-out of a country only 90 miles from our shores.

President Clinton promised more

jobs during his campaign. Thousands of new jobs would be created if the U.S. ended the 30-year embargo.

Cubans need shoes, clothes, food and medicine. Farmers from Iowa could prosper. Manufacturers of clothing from St. Louis and Chicago could hire more workers.

Cubans need soap and toothpaste. We manufacture those items. Cuba can pay for these items through their tourist trade—now rising. Ferryboats and tourist travel will increase jobs.

Raymond Mostek
Chicago

Heal thyself, Judis

I find it disturbing that in an issue of *ITT* (April 19) that otherwise admirably argues for the need to fight for a universal single-payer health care system, John Judis gives up the fight before his first paragraph is completed. Judis' eager acceptance of managed competition is a great disappointment to those who read an "alternative newsmagazine" in search of actual alternatives.

The managed-competition scheme proposed by the Clintons and the health insurance industry will provide neither universal health care nor a quality health care system. In fact, managed competition will generally lower health care standards of American workers as they are forced by fees and tax penalties to accept low-quality HMO care.

While Judis concludes that "hopefully" the Clintons' plan will offer full coverage for Americans, his support for the Clinton compromise (neither "laissez-faire" nor "socialist") is simply the wrong answer to the U.S. health care crisis. Many people I know are uninsured (I have not seen a doctor in more than a decade), and even more are underinsured and thus extremely vulnerable to financial catastrophe in the event of a serious illness or accident.

The reality is that the U.S. health care system is criminally inadequate. Poor and working people pay for it with their lives. The only humane demand that progressives can make is

for a single-payer system of quality care. Perhaps John Judis needs to stop hanging out with Washington insiders and see what a D.C. emergency room looks like on a Saturday night.

Tim Marshall
Chicago

Out of service

Joel Bleifuss has scored a direct hit with his "First Stone" of April 19. I hope you will allow me to add to his observations.

This country is just entering what may be a long-term economic crisis immune to standard policy panaceas. We may see a return to what some called the Gilded Age, but what Thorstein Veblen and Alvin Hansen, among other economists, called a "chronic depression."

The dispossessed worker in the late 19th century may have found employment in the growing industrial sector, but the numbers tell us that he or she was most likely to have found work in the service sector. The services—municipal, retail, transportation, domestic, financial, education and security—grew in the period from 1869 to 1898 from 55.4 percent to 62.8 percent of national income, while agriculture declined from 27.5 to 18.4 percent and manufacturing grew only from 17.1 to 18.8 percent.

Today the situation is somewhat more ominous. Stephen Prokesch reported in the *New York Times* that since the "official" end of the recession in March 1991 "jobs in New York City plunged by 145,000." He goes on to write that "Companies that provide services ... are finally following the lead of manufacturers in making great strides in getting work done with fewer employees, mainly because of advances in technology." The options open to today's displaced workers, however, seem much more restricted than in the days when the American West offered opportunity, and large companies relied more on labor inputs than on new machines to achieve growth.

T.R. Snyder
Ogunquit, Me.

InSHORT



READ 'N' RIGHT

It's morning in America for conservative magazines

The conservative movement is in tatters, the Republican Party is in shreds, but several conservative publications are enjoying a boom in subscribers. The New York-based biweekly *National Review*, founded in 1955 by William F. Buckley Jr., has seen its subscription list go from 96,000 in 1983 to 168,000 in 1992 to 209,000 today. The Washington-based *American Spectator's* circulation has risen from 30,000 at the beginning of last year to 150,000 today.

National Review boosted its circulation through television advertising and direct mail, but it is clearly benefiting from being in the opposition. Says

The conservative movement is in tatters, the Republican Party is in shreds, but several conservative publications are enjoying a boom in subscribers. The New York-based biweekly *National Review*, founded in 1955 by William F. Buckley Jr.,



By Woody Igou

Cavemen retreat

Budweiser held a press conference to announce that hereafter its new ad cam-

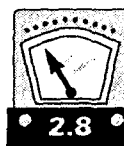


paign would no longer contain shots of scantily clad women. The spokesman

then earnestly replied that the change occurred, in part, because women now constitute a large market share for the consumption of beer. *It just doesn't get any more noble than that.*

The hills are a lie

Movie Line magazine recently listed "The Things That We Hate." Among them



were "zillions of actresses who have had silicone breast implants." Several pages

later, they ran an eye-catching four-page photo spread showing the cleavage of half the stars in Hollywood. And *Movie Line* "hates" the circulation boost, too.

Guns and Sex 'R' Us

In Boston, an eight-year-old girl was arrested for alleged-



ly attempting to rob a man of his VCR at gunpoint. And *Newsweek*

recently reported on a boom in the marketing of children's apparel designed to imitate "tart adult togs." Among the clothing items marketed for six-year-olds were midriff-cropped blouses, Madonna-inspired outfits and a variety of bikinis.

Childhood, the best four years of your life.

Newton meets Ripley

The *Daily Record* reports that a woman in Prague, believing that her husband had betrayed her, jumped from



her third-story window and landed on him as he passed below, killing

him instantly. She recovered. *Michael Douglas, beware.*

Cops or Studs

The *Orlando Sentinel* reports that a man has been arrested after repeatedly asking local police officers for their under-



wear for the past several months. The investigating detective stated

that "this guy has a fetish for cops. He does, he loves cops." He arrived at police headquarters with a videotape of the television series *Cops* and samples from his 400-piece underwear collection. At the time of his arrest he was wearing a diaper.

Why not team him up with L.A.'s ex-police commissioner, Daryl Gates, and launch a new line of undies called "Brief Justice?"

APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Weightless banality
2. Green Acres stupid
3. Malicious cretinism
4. Howard Sternesque
5. Mary Matalin mean
6. Gangrenous venality
7. A touch of evil
8. A cancer in the Zeitgeist
9. Et tu, Pol Pot?
10. Horseperson of the Apocalypse

National Review publisher Ed Capano, "My own thinking is that conservatives react differently to an adversarial administration. Not only Clinton but Bush was seen as an adversary. The media becomes a friend of the administration, and people want to go elsewhere. If Clinton sticks to his agenda, by the time of his re-election we should have a million subscribers."

The *American Spectator's* climb began with its March 1992 issue featuring a critical article on Anita Hill. Conservative talk-show host Rush Limbaugh lauded the exposé on his widely syndicated program, and the magazine was deluged with orders for that issue and for subscriptions. The *American Spectator* then started supplementing its direct mail with advertising on radio and television. Other publications have also boomed. The Des Moines-based *Conservative Chronicles*, which reprints conservative columnists, has seen its circulation rise from 48,000 to 70,000 within a year. It advertises on Limbaugh's television and radio shows and sends out direct mail.

The only conservative publications that haven't experienced sharp increases in circulation are theoretical journals like *The National Interest* and insider publications like *Human Events* that eschew advertising. Quipped one editor of a theoretical journal, "We sent a copy of our latest issue along with some free pizza coupons to Limbaugh in the hope that he would be bribed."

—John B. Judis

BEYOND BORDERS

Some in U.S. labor are seeking solidarity with Mexican unions

United Electrical Workers union (UE) organizer David Johnson estimates that, over the past decade, his union lost one-fifth of its membership as a result of factories moving south to Mexico. So the UE is now

providing strategic and financial help to a small Mexican union, the Authentic Workers' Front (FAT), to organize unions at Mexican plants of companies that have contracts with UE in the United States.

This cooperative organizing is one of the most advanced examples of emerging solidarity among rank-and-file workers and unions across the U.S.-Mexican border. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), if approved, will accelerate the already sizeable shift of U.S. manufacturing and other investment south of the border and the integration of the two national economies. Although most Mexican unions are aligned with the ruling party and support NAFTA, FAT and a few other union groupings oppose the agreement, just as do virtually all Canadian and U.S. unions.

Several examples of such emerging cross-border labor solidarity were highlighted in a late April conference in Dearborn, Mich., where more than 1,000 people from various insurgent forces within the labor movement gathered, including victorious Teamster reformers and dissident autoworkers. The conference was organized by the monthly newsletter *Labor Notes*.

•Baldemar Velasquez, leader of the Ohio-based Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), recounted how he struck up an alliance with a Mexican farmworkers union after Campbell's threatened to import more tomato paste. "The next [time the FLOC negotiated a] contract with Campbell's," Velasquez said, "they didn't say anything about cheap Mexican tomatoes."

•Mexican telephone workers learned about new technology they would soon confront on a visit with Canadian workers. Now Mexican, Canadian and U.S. telephone workers meet and exchange information to deal with com-

mon problems. Those include both drastic work reorganization and job displacement from new technology in Mexico and the prospect of the shift of manufacturing, already well underway, and even operator service work from the United States to Mexico.

•Rank-and-file autoworkers have been traveling to Mexico to meet with their counterparts and forge new ties among dissidents on both sides of the border. Minneapolis local union leader Tom Laney took an active role after the leader of a union reform movement in a Ford plant near Mexico City was killed. The Mexican union reformers have offered to organize opposition to accepting work now done in Canada or the United States if the UAW will support their movement.

While there is deep resentment among autoworkers over the big movement of auto jobs to Mexico, the direct contacts have transformed that anger. "We traveled to neighborhoods where Mexican autoworkers lived," said Dan Brooks, a veteran black local leader from Lordstown General Motors. "It was unbelievable. I'm sick of listening to things said in our plant about them taking our jobs for \$4 a day. Nobody wants to work for \$4 a day. We're not in competition. We're brothers and sisters. We're doing the same job."

The Teamsters, Clothing and Textile Workers (ACTWU) and the International Ladies Garment Workers (ILGWU) have also been increasingly active in cross-border relationships. In Canada, ILGWU has run a "Clean Clothes" campaign to persuade customers not to buy sweatshop clothing, whether from Mexican *maquiladoras* or ill-paid Canadian homeworkers.

As capital becomes more global, labor is groping for ways to catch up. But unions will have to pick up the pace. A German worker for General Motors reported that even in his plant, managers recently told workers to back down on their demands. Mexican workers, they warned, cost only 13 percent of what German workers cost.

—David Moberg

NOT OCEANS APART

U.S. Longshoremen look to distant shores for solidarity

As American workers and their labor unions go, the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) seems to be in an enviable position.

The ILWU has, through years of struggle, maintained a coast-wide contract covering every longshoreman doing work on the docks of the West Coast, including Hawaii, Alaska and Canada. ILWU wages are among the highest of any blue-collar American worker, starting at \$22 an hour in 1992, with top-notch health and pension plans. ILWU locals control the hiring through dispatch halls they run, and registered longshoremen get a guaranteed 28 or more hours a week pay even if there is no work in the port.

But despite all that, ILWU leaders know they are still vulnerable to attack by the large international shipping companies who are their employers. While cargo volume has increased threefold in 20 years, the technology and mechanization of the container revolution has bled longshore ranks from 13,600 to 8,500 today, a 38 percent slide.

A new president, David Arian of Los Angeles, came into office telling his members that the future of the ILWU is tied to the future of dockworkers around the world. Capital has never been as mobile as it is now, Arian says,

MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

Infotainment, food division

Cable television goes on fulfilling the promise of diversity of expression in the latest channel debut: Television Food Network. TVFN will program cooking and other food-related shows 24 hours a day on basic cable. The best part: a TV-set-top gizmo that issues on-the-spot merchandise coupons, direct from the local supermarket, to viewers.

No surprises

If, while reading the sports page, you ever thought you'd read it all before, now it's official: you have, and you will. The overworked sports editor can now buy "Sportswriter." It's bargain-basement software that takes the already well-honed formula for reporting game results, complete with clichés, and turns it into the local high school basketball game story with minimal help from the button-punching journalist.

Rocketing ratings

Ever since NBC's faking-news scandal in the GM truck story, the ratings for the offending show, *Date-line NBC*, have gone up. It seems nobody was expecting very much of TV news' journalistic standards in the first place. A recent *Los Angeles Times* poll showed that 56 percent of those surveyed right after the story ran believed such faking was routine. Contributing to

viewer confusion is the prevalence of "reality" shows like *Rescue 911* and rapid-response docudramas (soon to come in prime time: *Waco!*). These ratings-getters aren't just confusing viewers. They're also driving news producers to shock-value gimmicks, and to cross-selling tactics such as hyping the network's upcoming shows as "entertainment news."

Worlds apart

Prime-time broadcast-TV viewing tastes divide more sharply than ever on racial lines, according to an advertising industry report. Not one show on African-Americans' top 10 was on the top 10 for all U.S. households. Programs such as *Roc*, with African-American leads, were far more popular with African-Americans; whites, according to the study's director, appear to prefer shows in which African-Americans play supporting roles. Among viewers under 25 years old, however, blacks and whites have much more similar preferences, possibly marking African-American influence in youth culture.

And by the way

The Washington Peace Center's Stand Up for Choice project (P.O. Box 29490, Washington, DC 20017) has released the training tape, *Escorts: On the Line for Freedom of Choice*, explaining how to escort women wanting abortions into clinics.

© 1993 Pat Aufderheide

as entire industries move overseas and ocean shipping companies set up foreign flag-of-convenience operations on little-known islands like Vanuatu and Fiji to escape taxes, labor contracts and regulation.

The ILWU, led for 40 years by a former Australian sailor, the radical Harry Bridges, has always focused on international unionism. Steeped in that history, Arian convened the first Pacific Rim Dockers Conference April 12-14 in San Francisco, bringing into one room dockworkers from 24 unions in 15 countries. Australian and Japanese unions co-hosted the conference, which was attended by representatives from Brazil, Canada, Chile, Fiji, Honduras, Indonesia, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Panama, Singapore and Tahiti. From the U.S., the Teamsters, the East Coast-based International Longshoreman's Association and several seamen's unions were represented.

"We cannot keep fighting on a national front when the employers are becoming multinational," Arian said. "Increased cooperation would be necessary because of globalization of major shipping companies and the increased concentration of economic power in fewer and fewer hands."

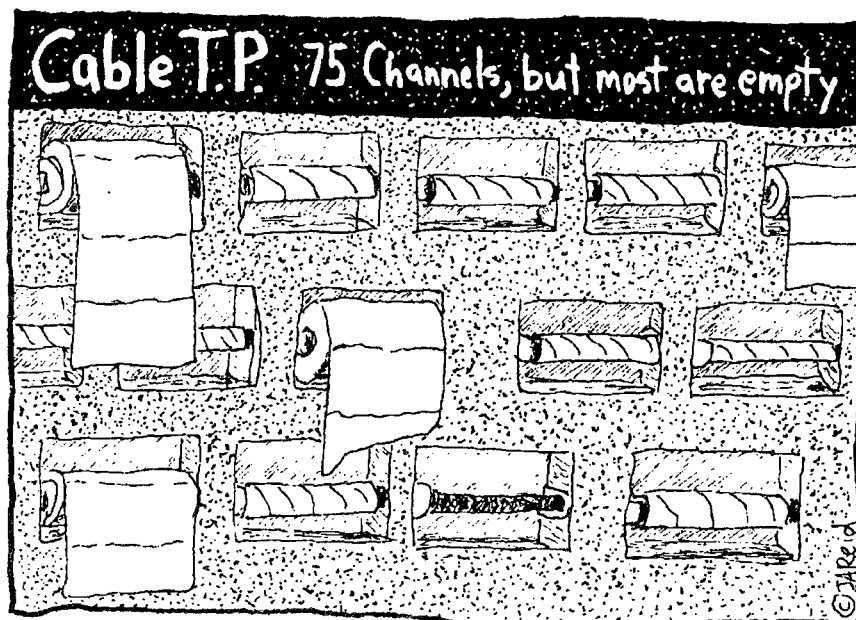
Arian also told the delegates, from unions representing a variety of political viewpoints, that ideology should not divide them. "What we have in common is that the shipping companies are kicking our butts. The struggle now is economic, between international corporations and workers. That economic struggle is the only one we can now fight."

At the end of the conference, the delegates issued a communiqué pledging coordinated activities to exchange information on safety standards, death and injuries; to conduct in-depth research on corporations operating in each country; to fight privatization of docks; and to develop a social charter to protect the economic and political interests of workers.

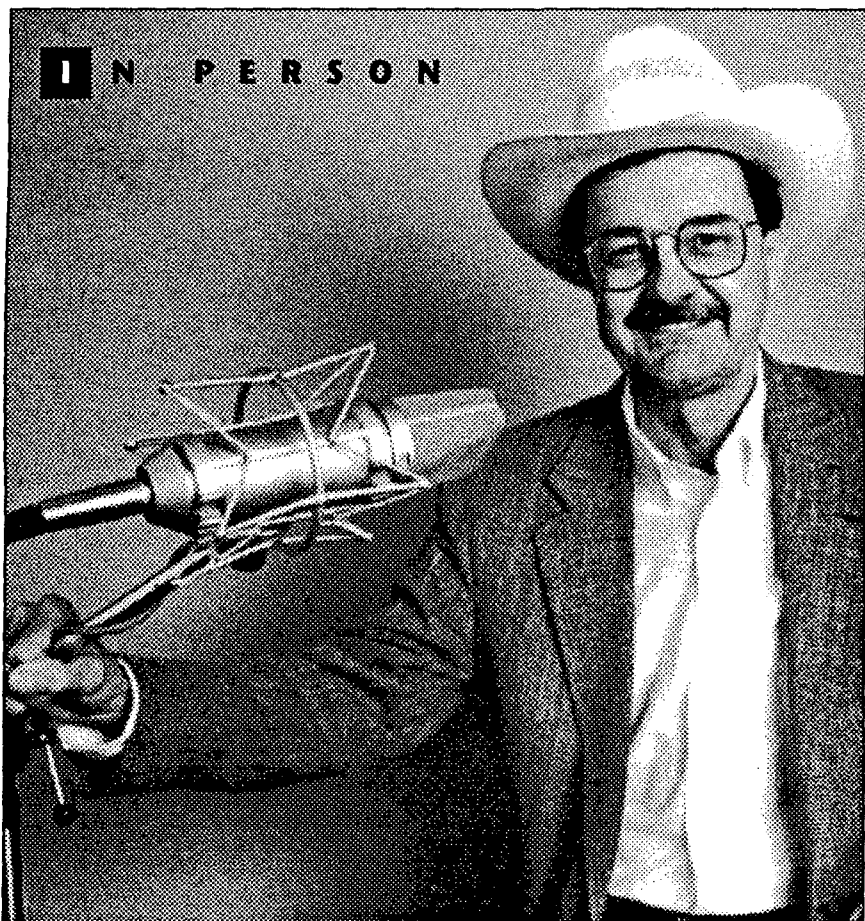
While the conference did not end with "one big union," it was a major step forward in the strengthening of the cooperation between workers separated by thousands of miles, several languages and different histories. —Zack Nauth (The writer is a frequent contributor to *In These Times* and a corporate strategist for the ILWU.)

ROUGH CUTS

By JA Reid



IN PERSON



© 1992 Ave Bonar

HELL-RAISER

Jim Hightower chews some progressive fat on talk radio

change sensationalism here. Hightower's talking NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement), health care, loggers vs. the environment, the S&L bailout. Lots of people may find such topics unfathomable or boring—but not after Hightower puts his Texas-honed broadax humor to work on them.

NAFTA is "so ugly it'd rot a cantaloupe at 100 paces" says Hightower, and any attempt at public relations cosmetics is "as useless as putting earrings on a hog." Wall Street heavies trying to convince us that they're backing the treaty for the betterment of the people are "kinda like Col. Sanders saying his mission is to improve the lifestyle of chickens."

Jim Hightower, the 50-year-old former Texas agriculture commissioner, former editor of the *Texas Observer* and a living reminder of a once-rich prairie populism, is more than a purveyor of country-style one-liners. He's an organizer and agitator whose heroes include Tom Paine and former Sen. Ralph Yarborough, the liberal for whom Hightower once worked who was defeated in 1970 by now Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen. Tired of hearing "day-in and day-out right-wing or corporate types" dominate the radio talk shows, Hightower decided to put some

Jim Hightower hopes that by the end of this year 1 million radio listeners will hear the sort of wisdom he serves up at his favorite hangout, The Chat and Chew Cafe. But they'll hear no celebrity fluff or sex-

ETC.

By Miles Harvey

A test for Clinton

When the Soviet Union and United States signed the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty—restricting nuclear tests to underground locations—they pledged to work actively toward ending *all* nuclear tests. No comprehensive test ban (CTB) treaty was ever reached, however, and for the past three decades costly and dangerous testing has continued in underground centers such as the U.S. test site in Nevada. Now, with the end of the Cold War, a CTB is once again a hot topic. The U.S., Russia and France are currently observing nuclear testing moratoria. Last year, Congress passed a law that requires President Clinton to submit a report to Capitol Hill containing a plan for achieving a CTB no later than 1996. And as a candidate, Clinton declared himself a CTB supporter. All bodes well, right? Not exactly. In the first place, the U.S. moratorium on testing expires 90 legislative days after the president submits his report to Congress—and the administration is giving indications that it wants to resume testing as early as this fall. Second, White House wonks appear to be coming up with a very uncomprehensive definition of "comprehensive." Peace and environmental advocates close to the situation say the administration is leaning toward a treaty that would ban only those nuclear tests that release more than one kiloton of energy. (To put that number in context, the bomb dropped on Hiroshima released about 13 kilotons of energy.)

The ostensible arguments for

such testing center on "reliability" and "safety." But the administration may have another agenda. Some government scientists are arguing for development of "usable" low-yield nuclear warheads. And these so-called "mininukes" could be developed with yields of less than one kiloton.

Getting testy...

If Clinton wants to resume testing in October, he must submit his CTB proposal to Congress by May 18. CTB advocates are making plans for a coordinated response. On May 20, representatives from grass-roots groups such as Physicians for Social Responsibility, Peace Action, Greenpeace and Citizen Alert will be meeting in Washington to plot strategy. They'll be joined by members of CTB groups from Europe and Russia. Administration officials have also been invited to the conference to exchange information with the organizations.

...and testier

While CTB supporters in Washington continue to lobby the White House and Congress, others are planning a more public kind of pressure. Greenpeace, the National Association of Radiation Survivors and the American Peace Test are among the organizations preparing for a June 5-7 national march on the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, 45 miles east of San Francisco. The lab was chosen because it directs many U.S. nuclear tests. For more information on the event, contact the Livermore Conversion Project, 1600 Clay St., San Francisco, CA 94109, (415) 567-4337.

"common sense" progressive politics into the debates that are fought each day over formica countertops across America.

Progressives forgot radio, he argues, and, simply by not making the effort to get on the air, conceded that forum to the right. In his first six weeks of offering his three-minute package of twice-a-day, five-times-a-week commentaries, he signed up 31 stations, including outlets in major markets like Cleveland, Houston, Dallas, Cincinnati, Buffalo and Washington, D.C. His sponsors include Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream, Stoneyfield Yogurt, Working Assets and the AFL-CIO. Some East Coast stations are wary about how well Texas talk may go over in their markets, but he has yet to encounter rejection because of his politics. "Most stations are money-oriented," Hightower observed. "They like controversy."

Hightower may be too modest to admit it, but he also succeeds because he has humor, style, personality and a shtick that goes against the grain: most people associate his Texas twang with conservative views. Coming from a Texan with a Stetson and cowboy boots, his spit-on-the-rich populism is as American as barbecue and iced tea.

Hightower exploits metaphors of daily life, especially food or clothes, to get his message across. The rich are "sipping fine wine and eating paté while we're lucky to stop at the 7-11 for a Tall Bud and a Slim Jim." Clinton appointees are "more Brooks Brothers than Sears Roebuck... They may look like America but they sure don't live like America."

He's blunt and up-front with his politics. "Don't camouflage your message," he advises. "Be yourself and be unabashed about it." That shows in his treatment of Clinton. "My heart is full of hope, my fingers are crossed, but my eyes are wide open," he says. At times he applauds Clinton, but he also chides the president. When Clinton backed off his Western land-use policy, Hightower observed, "Bill stuck his finger in the air and got a case of special interest frostbite."

Hightower gets more inspiration from Paul Harvey, a quirky conservative, than from harsh contemporary right-wingers like Rush Limbaugh. He will take a few whacks at his antagonists with comments like, "If ignorance goes to \$40 a barrel, I want drilling rights on that guy's head." But the big drug companies, savings-and-loan presidents and lobbyists with \$100 haircuts aren't like the visceral enemies of right-wing talking heads—gays, "feminazis," abortionists. "They're willing to be meaner," Hightower says. "It's a tenet of progressive-liberal thought that admits you might not be right. But there's a rigidity of thought on the right, or as Rush Limbaugh says, 'Of course I'm right.'"

Hightower has raised half of the \$1 million he budgeted for his first year of operations. And he is encouraged by the initial response. He gives telephone numbers of politicians and officials, plugs grass-roots groups and causes. His one constant theme is that "ordinary people do the extraordinary things in society." He sees his radio commentaries as feeding the grass-roots movements that will push Democratic politics beyond Clintonism.

There are a lot of people who wish Hightower were running for Bentsen's open Senate seat in Texas. But as a senator he says he would be stuck in Washington, spending all his time raising money for the next race, rarely out organizing in the countryside. "This plays to my strength, which is running my mouth, raising issues, hope and hell," Hightower says. "I don't believe another senator is as important as this."

—David Moberg

T H E F I R S T S T O N E

A NEW PLAGUE?

By Joel Bleifuss

A deadly disease that has long plagued sheep is killing cattle in parts of Europe. And it may be settling into a new host, humans. The disease that can be transmitted by eating an infected animal is known generically as transmissible spongiform encephalopathy. Now some evidence indicates that spongiform encephalopathy has appeared in the U.S. cattle population.

This malady gets its name from the sponge-like formations—holes filled with tangled protein fibrils—that occur in the brains of infected mammals. The disease has been recognized in sheep since 1755 and is known as scrapie. In 1985, it appeared in cattle in Britain and was given the name bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). It soon came to be known as mad cow disease, so named for the crazed movements infected cows make in the last stages of the disease. The human strain of transmissible spongiform encephalopathy comes in several forms, including Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD), a rare malady, and Kuru, a spongiform encephalopathy that a few decades ago plagued a population of New Guinea cannibals prior to changes in dietary laws.

BSE is currently an epidemic in Great Britain. Since 1985, when the disease first appeared, about 100,000 cows have been diagnosed with mad cow disease and, as law dictates, destroyed by incineration. The disease has since spread to herds in Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, Ireland and France.

British cows contracted BSE by eating protein supplements that contained scrapie-infected sheep. These high-energy supplements are made from the meat and bone meal rendered from the carcasses of dead ruminants. Farmers commonly feed protein supplements to dairy cows to ensure high milk production, and to beef cattle to ensure maximum growth.

BSE infected British cattle in the early '80s, when the rendering industry changed how animal carcasses were recycled. The previous rendering process, one that involved strong solvents and high temperatures, was replaced by a

more ecologically sound process that used no solvents and lower temperatures. It is believed that the previous process destroyed the unknown infectious agent—thought to be an unconventional virus—that causes scrapie in sheep. Apparently the new process fails to arrest the spread of the infectious agent, allowing it to enter the food chain.

Concerned for the safety of the human population, the British government in July 1988 banned the sale of ruminant brains and organs for human consumption. Similar bans were imposed in Ireland, France and Switzerland. The British government also prohibited feeding cattle protein supplements that contained rendered brains or organs.

In response to mounting public fears, Britain's Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry reported in 1989 that BSE posed no public health threat because cows were a "dead-end host" and could not transmit the disease to other animals. Not so. Laboratory experiments have since shown that BSE is easily transmitted to other mammals. Mice, pigs, sheep, goats and monkeys whose brains were inoculated with BSE-infected brain material developed spongiform encephalopathies. Further, in Great Britain, some pet cats and some zoo animals, including eland, oryx, cheetahs and pumas, have contracted spongiform encephalopathies from eating contaminated food.

Now evidence suggests that BSE may have already been transmitted to humans. In March, the *Weekly Telegraph* in London reported that a dairy farmer had died from CJD. The farmer had drunk milk from his dairy herd for the seven years prior to 1989. That was the year some cows in the herd developed mad cow disease and were incinerated.

Here in the U.S., the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Center for Veterinary Medicine recently acknowledged that if BSE-contaminated animal feed entered the food chain, it could become a public health concern. The center's Michael Osborne discussed the subject in a July 1991 memo entitled "BSE: Center for Veterinary Medicine Options for Control and Prevention." He wrote, "There is a growing trend in the use of meat and bone meal for calf rations ... Most is used as a protein source for high production dairy cattle and for feedlot cattle."

Are Americans at risk of contracting CJD? That question was raised on March 31 in testimony before the FDA. The FDA's Veterinary Medicine Advisory Committee had convened a public hearing to take testimony about Monsanto's proposal to market a bovine growth hormone that, when injected in cows, boosts milk production. (See "The First Stone," May 3, 1993.) The committee deemed that elevated levels of these growth hormones and resultant antibiotics in milk pose an "insignificant risk to human health."

In taking this stance the Veterinary Medicine Advisory Committee chose to disregard testimony from Michael

Hansen, a biologist employed as a research associate at Consumers Union. Hansen is concerned that farmers who use Monsanto's bovine growth hormone, Somatotrope, will have to feed their herds increased amounts of protein feed supplements. When milk production is artificially increased, cows require greater quantities of energy-concentrated feeds like protein supplements made from the rendered carcasses of cows and sheep.

Voicing his concerns about transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, Hansen told the committee, "These diseases have three disturbing attributes: a long incubation period, invariably fatal consequences and as-yet-unknown infective agents that are unusually resistant to most forms of sterilization and that produce no host immune response."

Hansen challenged the federal government's official line that no cases of BSE have been documented in the United States. He then advised the committee that some American cattle may already be infected with BSE. In 1985 in Stentonville, Wis., a mink ranch was wiped out by transmissible mink encephalopathy. The diet of the infected minks consisted of 5 percent horse meat and 95 percent "downer cows"—cows that fall down and are unable to get up.

Some cows afflicted with "downer cow syndrome" may actually be infected with BSE. In December 1992, Richard Marsh, a veterinary scientist at the University of Wisconsin, presented a paper entitled "Transmissible Mink Encephalopathy, Scrapie and Downer Cow Disease: Potential Links" at the Third International Workshop on BSE in Bethesda, Md. Marsh reported on experiments in Mission, Texas, and Ames, Iowa, where brain matter from scrapie-infected American sheep was injected into the brains of cows. The infected cows developed BSE, but their symptoms differed from the mad cow disease found in Europe.

The Wisconsin case of transmissible mink encephalopathy and the experiments in Mission, Texas, and Ames, Iowa, have made Marsh fear that an unrecognized form of BSE may already have infected the U.S. cattle population. Marsh told *In These Times*, "The signs that these cattle showed were not the widely recognized signs of BSE—not signs of mad cow disease. What they showed was what you might expect from a downer cow." In other words, BSE-infected cattle in Europe went mad prior to dying, but BSE-infected cows in the U.S. simply fell down and died. Each year in the U.S. about 100,000 cattle die from downer cow syndrome. Marsh said, "In Wisconsin alone, we probably have about 20,000 to 30,000 downer cattle a year." Further, according to Marsh at least 14 percent of all rendered cattle in the

U.S.—including downer cows—are made into protein supplements that are then fed to other cattle.

Marsh believes this widespread practice of feeding dead cows to living cows should be outlawed. "In Wisconsin we are trying to inform farmers and feed compounders about the risk of feeding cows to cows," he said. "We are trying to get them not to use ruminant sources for animal protein feed. In my opinion, that is a real risk factor. If we do have something circulating in our cattle that we don't recognize, this feeding process is the perfect way to perpetuate it."

Officials at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) are aware of Marsh's concerns, but have done nothing. "The USDA tends to respond to commodity groups rather than the consumer. And the government hasn't taken any measures to restrict what goes into animal feed," said Marsh. "The Center for Veterinary Medicine at the FDA would have to make the recommendation not to feed ruminant animals to cattle, but we can't get them to do this."

Hansen of the Consumers Union is equally concerned about the lukewarm federal response to what could be a serious public health threat. "The implications of this stuff are so explosive that people are burying their heads in the sand," he said. "They don't want to be around when it explodes."

Next issue: The threat to humans and why the U.S. government has failed to act.

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan

Hmm... long hours for low pay,
hands-on work with extremely toxic
substances in a small unventilated room
where rats nibble at my ankles and fellow
bored co-workers stick me with pins
for sport? But you say there's a
health plan? I'll take it and
I'll never leave.



THE PRESIDENCY

At the crossroads

B

ill Clinton, who promised to focus on the American economy like a "laser beam," has belatedly discovered what George Bush knew all along: it is much easier to change the world than to get Congress to approve a tax increase or money for the cities.

After months of indecision and equivocation, Clinton is finally taking action in Bosnia. If the American objective is not to resolve ancient hatreds but to stop the Serbians from exterminating Bosnian Muslims, the chances of the president's success are quite good.

But his chances of success on his domestic program are growing shakier by the day. Barely five months into his presidency, Clinton—like the last Democratic president—is bogged down in details. He is quickly losing his authority over Congress. And the public, once enthusiastic, is

now wary. In fact, two Democrats running in elections this spring—Texas senatorial candidate Robert Krueger and Wisconsin congressional candidate Peter Barca—chose to distance themselves from Clinton's record.

His domestic problems are not entirely of his own making. The economy needs drastic reform, but Americans are still not convinced that it does. Lacking a mood of crisis, Clinton has had to build a coalition among diverse and sometimes competing interests. The Republicans and Ross Perot have been eager to exploit the potential rifts in Clinton's coalition—between city and suburb, black and white, middle class and working class. Perot, who advocated major tax increases during the campaign, has been particularly irresponsible in attacking the president as a tax-and-spend liberal.

Yet Clinton deserves some blame for his plight. During the campaign and the first months of his presidency, he has repeatedly given intimations of a new progressivism that could alter the relation between the

government and the economy and re-establish the Democrats as a majority party. This side of Clinton could be glimpsed in his fall campaign and in his initial presentation of his economic program.

But on the two issues that Perot has most effectively attacked him, the budget and trade, Clinton keeps ignoring the preoccupations of middle-class voters who are essential to the formation of a new Democratic coalition. Instead, he has followed the silk-stocking strategy that has doomed the Democrats for two decades by talking about the needs of the poor and the cities, while jealously guarding the prerogatives of stock speculators, foreign lobbyists and the CEOs of multinational corporations.

This sorry strategy has been evident in the way Clinton handled the recent budget debate. During his presidential campaign, he recognized that most Americans would support new spending and tax initiatives only if they could see some direct benefit from them and only if the increases were combined with reforms in government spending and service delivery. The public's concern about government has been stoked by both conservatives and liberals who, while complaining of different government departments, have made the same charge of waste and abuse.

The charge has been justified. Many government departments besides the Pentagon consist of layers of encrusted bureaucracy that, in a private business, would have been eliminated long ago. For instance, although more than a handful of farmers can be found in only 15 percent of American counties, the Department of Agriculture operates field offices in 85 percent of the nation's counties. According to a recent report in *Governing* magazine, Clark County, Nev., home to Las Vegas, has 13

***Bill Clinton—
like the last
Democratic
president—
is bogged
down in
details.***

By John B. Judis
WASHINGTON D.C.



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Agriculture Department employees and 40 farmers.

In presenting his budget to Congress, Clinton fell into the trap of leading with his spending and tax increases. Even though he promised to pare government during his campaign, he rejected a Republican proposal that he pay for part of his stimulus package through cuts in administrative expenses. And the stimulus package itself was vulnerable to attack. It contained numerous items that had nothing to do with creating jobs—for instance, vaccination for children, AIDS funding and an Energy Department program for cooperative technology development. Further, many of the job programs would not have created jobs for at least a year. The stimulus package was a grab-bag of programs, held together not by some common purpose but by the loyalties of the Democratic constituencies that lobbied for them.

The Republicans led the opposition to the stimulus package, but five Democrats—Richard Shelby of Alabama, Russell Feingold and Herb Kohl of Wisconsin, and Jim Exon and Bob Kerrey of Nebraska—backed the Republican compromise on the stimulus package. Feingold, Kohl and Kerrey cannot be dismissed as conservative Democrats indifferent to the poor. Their opposition represented a real crack in Clinton's own coalition.

By itself, the bill's defeat will have little impact. As Jeff Faux of the Economic Policy Institute has noted, the pack-

age wasn't large enough to stimulate the economy. Its most urgent important provision—extending unemployment insurance—was passed on a separate vote soon afterward. But Clinton suffered a significant political setback in the debate. He allowed himself to be defined as a captive of Democratic interest groups and the government he was supposed to reform. That impression could undermine all his other domestic initiatives—from health care to industrial policy.

Indeed, Clinton's budget has now begun to unravel. The day after Senate Republicans successfully killed the stimulus bill through a filibuster, House Republicans on the Science Committee blocked consideration of a \$2 billion research-and-development program. They staged a walkout so that a vote could not be taken to send the bill to the House floor.

Daniel P. Moynihan, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and Dan Rostenkowski, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, have already declared their opposition to some of Clinton's tax proposals, including his investment tax credit. And both Democrats and Republicans are now urging the administration to delay presenting its health care reform plan until after its budget is accepted.

In forging his budget strategy, Clinton lost the focus on the middle class that served him so well during his campaign. Having shelved the middle-class tax cut—which arguably is as good a “stimulus” as investment tax credits

or highway funds—he directed attention instead to community block grants for New York City and tax breaks for IBM. The president's trade strategy has evolved along similar lines.

During his campaign, Clinton promised to abandon the Bush administration's dogmatic support for free trade, which led it to ignore foreign trade barriers, the dumping of foreign products on the American market, foreign takeovers of American high-technology firms and tax evasion by foreign companies. Clinton also promised to win side agreements to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that would ease fears that corporations would use the new agreement to export jobs to Mexico and to undermine American environmental regulations. And he promised to end the reign of the revolving-door lobbyists in setting Washington's trade policies.

In their public statements, Clinton and U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor have appeared to keep these promises. Influenced by Laura Tyson, chairwoman of the Council of Economic Advisers, the president has advocated setting specific sectoral targets for opening Japanese markets. During meetings in February, Kantor assured labor and environmentalists that he understood their concerns about NAFTA.

But facing determined opposition from the Treasury and State Departments, the president and Kantor have backed off privately on every specific issue. During the campaign, for instance, Clinton estimated that the government could extract \$45 billion in unpaid taxes from foreign corporations. That figure was probably too high, but last month Lloyd Bentsen's Treasury Department came up with a ridiculously low estimate of \$1.8 billion.

During the campaign, and again in March, Clinton promised to restore the tariff on imported minivans that Japan's lobbyists had pressured the Bush administration to remove. (The lobbyists convinced the Bush Customs Department to change the designation of minivans from "trucks" to "cars" for tariff purposes, while still allowing the Japanese to count them as "trucks" in delimiting car imports to the U.S.) The Treasury and State Departments have also insisted that NAFTA signatories be denied the use of trade sanctions to enforce compliance with the side agreements—a position tantamount to gutting the agreements themselves. And Kantor himself has edged away from his tough language on NAFTA. As a result, the agreement is deservedly in serious trouble on Capitol Hill.

In response to Perot, Clinton also pledged last fall to end the revolving door between trade officials and lobbyists and consultants. But as Perot charged last month, the president has filled his administration with people who worked for foreign companies and governments. Joan Spero, the State Department's top trade expert, was a paid adviser to Toyota when she worked at American Express; her top aide, Daniel K. Tarullo, was a partner in a New York law firm that represented the Mexican government during NAFTA negotiations. The nominee to the number-three post at the office of

the U.S. Trade Representative, Washington lawyer Charlene Barshefsky, represented the Nippon Steel Corp. and advised a coalition of Mexican companies on NAFTA.

Clinton has filled other sensitive trade positions with investment bankers whose firms were partly owned by the Japanese. Treasury Undersecretary Roger Altman, who co-chairs the administration group of U.S.-Japan relations, was a senior partner of the Blackstone Group, an investment bank one-fifth owned by Nikko Securities. Altman's specialty was selling American companies to Japanese buyers. Another Blackstone partner, Jeffrey Garten, is expected to be nominated to the Commerce Department's top trade position.

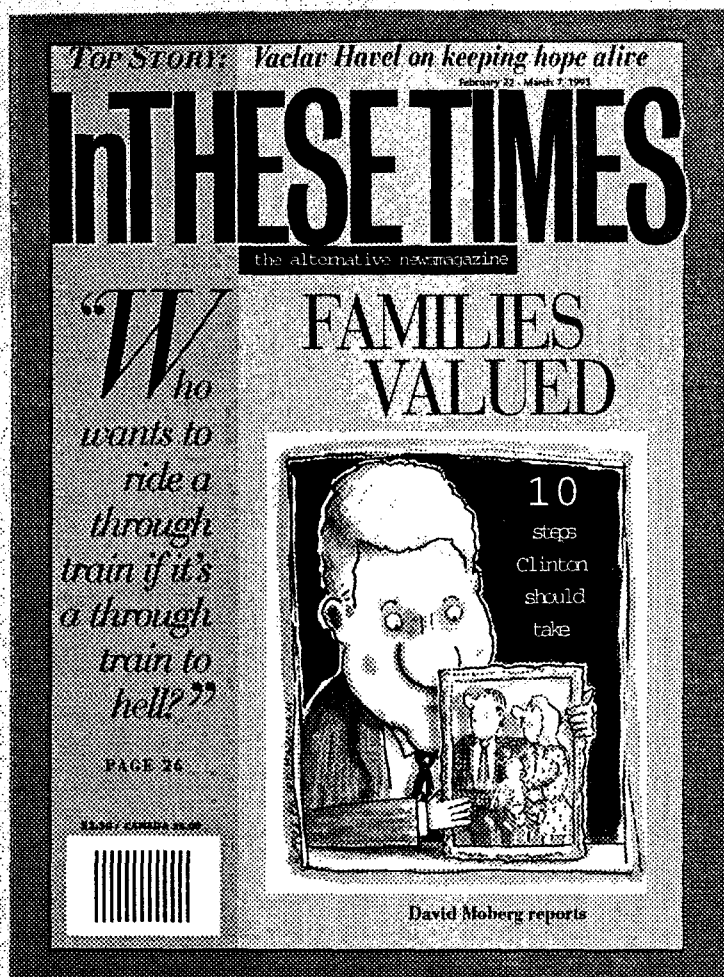
These appointments reflect Clinton's continued allegiance to his financial backers on Wall Street and K Street. He may make militant speeches, but officials like Altman and Barshefsky are in a position to set American trade policy.

The president's other economic initiatives may suffer the same fate as his trade and budget policies. Clinton isn't expected to present his health care reform plan until late May at the earliest, but the administration has already been sending up ominous trial balloons. These leaks suggest that he will do whatever is necessary to appease the health industry, even though health care lobbyists are deeply divided. Clinton officials have hinted that they may want to tax health insurance benefits, counting them as wages—a strategy that conforms to the health care industry's belief that consumers are at the root of rising health care costs.

Clinton officials have also floated a plan for voluntarily containing health care costs—a veritable contradiction in terms. The administration would set guideposts for hospitals and doctors to follow and would then complain loudly when costs predictably go through the roof. And the administration has also suggested that it may allow large companies to buy their own insurance for their employees rather than contribute to the health insurance purchasing cooperatives. Together, these measures would seriously weaken the health plan's popular appeal.

It's difficult to find an issue where Clinton hasn't buckled under to the CEOs and bankers who financed his campaign. Last February, the president promised to curb the "excessive pay" of CEOs by denying firms a tax deduction for salaries larger than \$1 million. But under pressure from the financial community, he quietly backed off. Last month the administration announced that CEO stock options would not be included in the \$1 million limit. That's like setting a limit on gluttony, but excluding dessert.

Many of these actions—from the president's abdication on foreign tax evasion to his abandonment of limits on executive salaries—are not yet visible to the public. But if Clinton and the media don't reveal them, his political opponents will. He stands at a perilous crossroads in his presidency. If he doesn't soon regain his focus on the broader needs of Americans, he will not be able to pass his economic program, and may suffer the same unhappy fate as the last Democratic president. ◀



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COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

Seeds of justice

*His dedication
verged on
mania, but
Cesar Chavez
offered a
vision of
liberation
for America's
poorest
workers.*

By John Gardner

I remember vividly a July 1975 dawn in Oxnard, Calif. Helicopters suddenly appeared over the windbreak of trees, spraying pesticides on tomato fields still wet with dew.

Dozens of people were already working the wet rows. Most were Mexicans, but everyone got hit—African-Americans, Syrians, Filipinos and a solitary Chinese. One man's forearms erupted immediately in red blotches that kept expanding. "It only lasts a few days," he told me resignedly. Mothers covered infants with blankets, then wet the blankets with drinking water, improvising cocoons to protect their babies' faces. Two old men coughed, examining their spit for blood. Nobody seemed surprised except me, the newly arrived United Farm Workers organizer from New York City.

I was there organizing

because Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers of America (UFW) had suddenly and unexpectedly won the historic 1975 California Agricultural Labor Relations Act (ALRA). Images of that summer came back immediately when I heard Chavez had died last month. I remembered his brother Richard and union Vice President Dolores Huerta excitedly telling the New York boycott staff that the ALRA had passed. For the first time in this country, farmworkers could elect union representation, if they dared.

That summer in Oxnard offered a crash course in organizing under many of the nation's best organizers. I took it. So did several thousand farmworkers from Calexico to the northern San Joaquin Valley. So did hundreds of young volunteers from cities across the country, inspired by the chance to make a difference in farmworkers' lives, and in our own.

Within not decades or years but months and weeks, the farmworkers' environment changed dramatically. In California valleys

the evidence was everywhere—in farmworkers' faces, in their newfound security, in the way they insisted on decencies thought impossible only days before. The elections raised the stakes in the UFW's many years of organizing. To forestall contracts, growers raised wages and benefits. The bidding for loyalty brought farmworkers the confidence to expect and demand minimal civilities—like not working in pesticide clouds at dawn.

Others had tried countless times since the '30s to organize agricultural workers: labor unions, compassionate liberals and earnest Christians, immigrant fraternal societies, Wobblies, Communists, Socialists—everyone in 20th-century America committed to labor justice. But it was Cesar Chavez who made real headway. Now that he is gone, those of us who worked with him realize we can't imagine anyone else who could have attempted—much less accomplished—what he did during his lifetime.

To organize farmworkers he had to tackle four problems at once. He needed to organize them, to get the leverage so that organizing meant something, to unite bitterly divided regions and nationalities and to simultaneously sustain all these long enough for growers to pay attention.

Chavez organized them in fraternal service organizations. He got the leverage by inventing a boycott fueled by feverish enthusiasm for liberating America's poorest workers. He united races, nationalities, religions and languages in the fields and cities across the nation by speaking and living a simple life dedicated to justice. And he sustained all of it by his personal example.

"You can't organize on money," he used to tell us. "There isn't enough money to organize now. There never

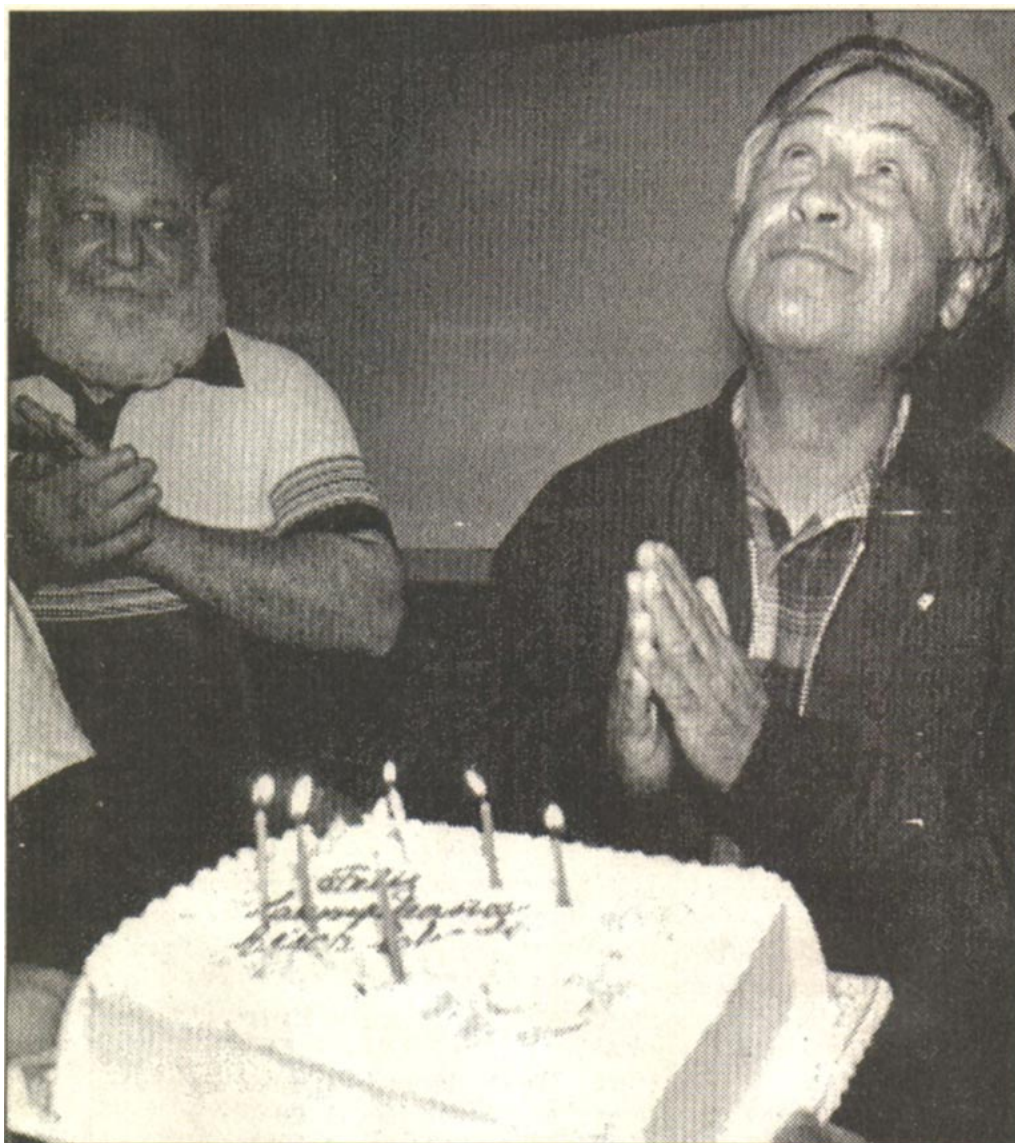
was, and there never will be. Once you depend on money, you're dead." He lived on the UFW stipend of room, board and \$5 a week. He challenged his constituencies—unions and religious communities—as hard as he challenged the growers he targeted.

I remember hosting a meeting for him at an Oxnard labor camp. Workers kept reciting fearful threats from labor contractors, growers and Teamster henchmen. "You know something, *compañeros*?" he said. "There's nothing can stand in the way of people committed to justice. When we have a vision of justice to share, nobody and nothing can possibly hold us back." He contradicted everything they said, yet they believed him. Their belief gave them the courage to win the next week's election.

He invented a type of organizing that synthesized the tactics of the civil rights and anti-war movements, cooperatives, labor unions, community organizing and religious ministries. Everyone in the union was uncomfortable with at least one aspect of this bizarre medley. But he got us all to live with each other because the union needed every one of these tactics and constituencies. Nowhere else then or since could you find nuns working beside immigrant laborers and college students, a routine combination in the UFW. He didn't care whether he had to march 1,000 miles or set up a shrine outside a vineyard—if it worked, we were going to do it.

Most of all, he had a will so strong that it frequently felt as if nothing could get in its way. "There's a moment," he would tell us about growers, politicians, corporations, sheriff's deputies, "when they believe we want it more, stronger and longer than they want to keep it from us. That's the moment we win."

Chavez had his weaknesses. He miscalculated disastrously in 1976, when he believed the UFW could win a statewide referendum to write ALRA funding into the California constitution. The proposition lost, and neither the UFW nor farm labor organizing ever quite recovered.



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His dedication verged on mania, and he expected as much from everyone in the union. He knew that unless he could make the UFW national, faster than growers could find ways to head him off, the union would never accomplish the changes he envisioned. Administration, routine and order took a back seat to anything that promoted or sustained his vision.

A more skilled and patient administrator might have built a sturdier union or lost less in big strategic gambles. A better balanced leader might have hurt loyal followers much less. But an even-tempered and prudent leader never would have been able to coerce multinationals like Tenneco and Coca-Cola into signing contracts. Someone without Chavez' vision never would have established the service centers, health clinics and retirement villages that offered hope for an entirely different way of life for farmworkers. Someone without his courage never would have tackled the issues that drove growers mad with fury—child labor, field

Cesar Chavez (right) drew inspiration from many sources.

safety, the short-handled hoe, health insurance and pesticides.

The UFW never seriously threatened growers after 1976, in California or anywhere else. But the union continued to play a critical role in legislation and services that consolidated UFW achievements, if not the UFW itself. In workers' compensation, immigration law, unemployment compensation, Social Security and occupational safety, the union set national legislative and regulatory precedents, effectively publicized problems and won federal legislation.

In my attic I keep a photograph of Chavez from 1975. He isn't speaking to a rally in Salinas or Delano, he isn't leading a picket line or marching to Sacramento. He's sitting in front of a farmworker's house where he would spend the night, eating from half an entire watermelon standing on end like an enormous bowl. Wet-haired from the shower he had just taken, wearing only a farmworker's dungarees, his Indian eyes smiling at the camera, he looks as proud as a new father.

In Milwaukee, where I live, there are maybe 200 people whose lives have been permanently transformed by a few months' or a few years' work with the UFW. There are about 12,000 like us around the country and the world.

At a time when racial and nation-

al boundaries were becoming rigid and bitter, Chavez laid down the law and enforced it in the UFW. Any woman who would work for farmworkers was a sister, any man a brother. He vested in each organizer the authority of his integrity, and we carried it with pride.

He changed notions of organizing even more dramatically than he changed the lives of workers in the fields. His combining of organizing techniques created something different from other schools of organizing whose methods sometimes limit imagination and effect. The UFW established the national consumer boycott as a serious threat to any corporation with advertised brand names. And while the Roman Catholic Church has often played important, progressive roles in the American labor movement, Chavez made the Church's contributions visible and collegial to the Protestants, Jews, Muslims and non-theists who

worked with so many Catholic clergy and laity in the UFW. The methodical, painstaking building of independent groups through personal visits and house meetings has expanded our concept of what organizing is. And after working with Chavez, no one could really ever question that the community and work of democratic commitment offer at least as much as they demand.

Today we work in labor unions, community groups, schools, governments, wherever we can find places and ways to revive and sustain the promise we learned from Chavez. Middle-aged now, lacking his certainty and his relentless will, we keep living out a vision of community and justice we now know we will never experience as completely as we did living with the UFW and Cesar Chavez. ◀

John Gardner is the director of organizing for Leadership for Jobs in Milwaukee.

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E G Y P T

Fundamental flaws

M

agdy Hassanein lives in the 800-year-old neighborhood of Khan el-Khalili, where he has been a keen observer of local life for all his 39 years. He works as a *khirty*, an informal guide for the tourists who visit the old Muslim Quarter.

The job involves steering foreigners along the noisy, jammed lanes toward the shops that sell perfumes, carpets, papyrus drawings and inlaid boxes. In return, Hassanein collects a commission from the shopkeepers. He is good at his work, not only because he speaks excellent colloquial English and some French, German and Italian, but because he genuinely loves meeting new people and being a part of the bustling life in the old area.

Business is off badly these days, due to a few well-publicized attacks on

tourists in Egypt by the Islamic Group, a band of revivalists who have declared low-level war against the unelected center-right government of President Hosni Mubarak. (One of the Group's spiritual advisers is Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, the blind cleric whose New Jersey mosque included among its worshippers some of the men charged with bombing New York's World Trade Center in February.)

The attacks—and fierce government reprisals—have left as many as 100 people dead over the past two years. As a result of this climate of violence, Hassanein has more time to sit in the local coffeehouses with his many friends, smoking a water pipe and blasting the government. They are not at all afraid of government *jawasiis*, or spies. "Of course they are around," he laughs. "But they are also living through the economic crisis, and so they agree with us."

The Western media tends to portray Islamic revivalism as a result of irrationality and fanaticism inherent in the Islamic religion itself. This shallow view is part of the mainstream interpretation of the rebirth of ethnic and religious conflict in Eastern

Europe, South Asia and elsewhere: age-old passions, held in check only by dictatorship or other factors, are bursting forth like another bout of a recurrent disease.

Hassanein has a different interpretation. "In our area, we have many, many youths, between, say, 17 and 30 or 35. Let's say he's 25—even if he has a good degree, say from secondary school or even from university, he can't find work. He says, 'What can I do? I want to marry. I'm horny. My penis is standing up all night. But what can I do? Where will I earn the money to get a house? I need to find 4,000 or 5,000 pounds to pay key money for an apartment, but there is no work. How can I feel that I am a man? Am I going to spend all my life like this? There never will be a good future because of this fucking economic time that we are in. This is a problem of our whole generation. Fuck Mubarak!'"

Hassanein is quick to point out that only a handful of these frustrated youths become violent. He is a practicing Muslim himself, and he vehemently argues that the Islamic Group's attacks contradict the principles of his religion. The vast majority of Egyptians agree with him, and the actual physical threat, to foreign visitors and others, has been greatly overplayed in the West. In fact, Cairo has a very low crime rate, and a visitor can go anywhere in the city at any time of day or night.

But Hassanein is sympathetic to the much larger and non-violent political party called the Muslim Brotherhood, and he would consider voting for it if there were free elections. The government is not about to allow any such open vote, but some experienced observers here believe the Broth-

*The Western
notion that
Islamic
violence is due
to the
supposedly
irrational
character of the
Mideast is
simply wrong.*

By James North

CAIRO

ers could well be the largest single party.

Hassanein's analysis is borne out by more formal analysis. Egypt has a classic Third World economy, trapped by its dependence on few exports. For years, the staple was cotton. More recently, it has earned its foreign exchange by exporting two things: oil and people. During the mid-'80s more than 2 million Egyptians were away, primarily in Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States and Iraq, where they typically worked in skilled positions, like teacher or clerk, and sent money home to their families. But an economic slowdown, hastened by the Gulf War, in which hundreds of thousands of migrants were expelled, has tightened this safety valve.

Egypt has many skilled workers, partly due to its liberal education policies. Back in the time of Gamal Abdel-Nasser, the nationalist who ruled from 1952 to 1970 with a mixed record, education was expanded dramatically, and every university graduate was guaranteed a job with the govern-

ment. The employment policy grew to be so costly that salaries fell and inefficiency increased because the bureaucrats were all off driving taxis and working in other jobs to get by.

The policy came under deserved criticism from international lending agencies that, due to Egypt's indebtedness, have a great deal of influence in local economic affairs, and it is being phased out. But it was at least an effort to address one of the major structural problems that many Third World countries share, one that currently fashionable "free market" proposals barely recognize. The problem is this: distorted, unbalanced economies cannot provide work for their people.

Thus it is that Heba Handoussa, the distinguished economist who is also vice-provost of the American University in Cairo, writes approvingly that education in Egypt should be reduced to help improve economic efficiency. But Egyptian



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parents are no less hopeful for their children than are their American counterparts. And what would be the fate of an American administration that announced publicly it planned to close colleges and reduce the number of places in the remaining ones?

Similarly, the subsidies on staple foods like bread and rent control in Cairo (also legacies of the Nasser era) are under fire from international economists as distortions that prompt inefficient use of resources. Here again, there is some truth, although the World Bank has historically had less to say about other distortions, like the international arms trade, which loaded Egypt with billions of dollars of debt for unnecessary weapons. (The United States alone provided Egypt with about \$1.3 billion a year in arms a year through the '80s.) But it is the Egyptian government and not the World Bank that would have to face the massive street protests that would greet any sudden cut in subsidies, such as the street demonstrations that nearly toppled Anwar El-Sadat in 1977 and that threatened Mubarak in 1986.

Into this bewildering atmosphere of crisis and economic complexity come the Islamic revivalist movements, with their apparently simple, direct message. They look like a fresh alternative after the Nasserist/leftists and the Sadat/centrists, who have successively failed to solve Egypt's crisis. Magdy Hassanein believes that every single minister in Mubarak's cabinet is corrupt. He heatedly contrasts this behavior with his upstairs neighbor, who is an active member of the Muslim Brotherhood. "He is a very good man, very honest, a good neighbor," Hassanein said. "He is always at prayers. He is very forgiving. If you do something wrong to him he will always forgive you."

The Brotherhood is in one sense lucky because it has never had the responsibility of political power. Its economic program is mainly a vague set of bright aphorisms, and much of its support is clearly a protest vote that could well drain away once it had to make some hard choices in office. Amina Shafiiq, a veteran leftist who is a leader in the Journalists Union, says, "I remind the Brotherhood, for instance, that we have an agrarian problem. Just talking about the Holy Qur'an is not enough. They must put forward their proposed solution."

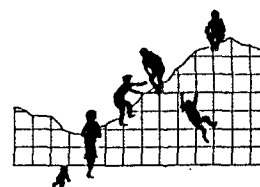
The mainstream free market view is that to develop economically, nations need multinational investment, aid and a more educated workforce. Egypt is one more example of the shallowness of this argument. More investment, given the present lopsided distribution of income, would simply produce more consumer goods for the Egyptian elite; local television is a bad joke, advertising products beyond the reach of most Egyptians. The country also enjoys plenty of foreign aid (it is, after Israel, the second largest U.S. aid recipient, getting several billion a year since the 1979 Camp David peace accords). Much of the help bought weapons or was otherwise wasted, but the crisis continues. And respected economists such as Handoussa insist that Egypt has not too few educated people but too many.

Today, probably no one has a set of answers to Egypt's crisis. Shafiiq says, "We have to admit that there is a crisis among the left, among socialists, everywhere. Theoretically and practically, the practice of socialism has failed. We have to answer this question: why did it fail? We have to sit down and examine our thinking."

What is certain though is that the economic models being imposed from outside have no chance of success. How Egypt can best reconcile its need to produce efficiently for itself, to participate in world trade and to provide work for its people are questions that can only be thrashed out in a democratic system that permits free and open debate. But the Mubarak government continues to perpetuate itself in power. One of its answers to the violent campaign against it is to arrest "hostages" from the families of suspected Islamic Group members, steps not publicized in the local press but known to international human rights agencies and to ordinary Egyptians, who are angered even if they repudiate the fundamentalist organization.

No one here shares the alarm of some Western journalists that the Islamic Group could come to power any time soon. But the organization has already crossed the threshold to successful small-scale violence, and even though the real danger is small, it has severely damaged the tourist industry. The Group may well be where Peru's Sendero Luminoso was back around 1981, an irritant in national life that could grow considerably if the economic crisis continues.

James North is a frequent contributor to *In These Times*.



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ENVIRONMENT

A paler shade of green

A

Clinton's latest budget shows some slippage, and the wheeling and dealing on Capitol Hill may soon grow fierce.

By Will Nixon

Although green in his February State of the Union address, Bill Clinton's budget proposals have turned the shades of camouflage in a five-pound version released in early April—part forest green, part pale olive plus a few brown splotches.

The nastiest surprise came on the eve of the recent Northwest Forest Conference in Portland, when the president's chief of staff, Mack McLarty, accepted a demand from Western senators to drop subsidy reforms from the budget package. The reforms had seemed like the perfect cause for a crusading new administration. And to this day Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt vows to get them passed. "It is simply, absolutely unreasonable to [tell] the American people everyone should pay their fair share—except

miners, except timber companies, except ranchers and except reclamation water users," he recently told the National Press Club.

The federal government charges ranchers \$1.88 a month to graze cows on public land, compared to the average fee of \$9.66 on private land. The government sells land for mining at \$5 an acre or less, and charges no royalties on the \$4 billion in hardrock minerals like gold and silver that miners extract each year. And the U.S. Forest Service loses money on most of its timber sales, an estimated \$5.6 billion in the past decade.

Environmental groups have harped on these numbers for years, and recently formed a loose confederation with conservative taxpayer organizations to reform these federal support programs that outlived their purpose to help settle the West decades ago. So they were stunned when the White House suddenly dropped them from its budget plan. "It bushwhacked groups like the Sierra Club and the National Wildlife Federation that had alerted their grass-roots activists to support the plan. And they have hundreds of thousands of members. As someone said, things went from being, 'It's the budget package, stupid' to 'It's

a stupid budget package,'" says Ralph De Gennaro, co-author of a groundbreaking "Earth Budget" analysis for Friends of the Earth.

"The White House made this deal [to drop the subsidy reforms] way too soon and got nothing for it," adds Jim Lyons of the Mineral Policy Center, which lobbies to bring the notorious 1872 Mining Law into the late 20th century. He believes that the Senate will pass reform legislation this year, but that the White House dissipated the growing momentum for substantial changes. He also notes that Sen. Max Baucus (D-MT), who led the Western delegation's visit to the White House, co-owns a family ranch in Montana that has signed a lease with Phelps-Dodge for a huge gold mine that will be mostly on neighboring state land. The Baucus ranch, however, still demanded royalties for the gold and reclamation to restore land after the mining, two things missing on federal lands.

Federal subsidies have long been almost impossible to kill. Even Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) has stepped up to fight Clinton's February proposal to raise the fuel tax on barges that travel the inland waterway system built and maintained by the federal government. (The current tax of 19 cents a gallon covers 20 percent of construction and none of the operating costs. Clinton wants to raise it \$1.) A recent report by Public Citizen's Congress Watch, titled "Cashing in on Their Campaign Investments," found that PACs from the inland waterway industry had contributed \$7.5 million to congressional candidates between 1983 and 1992.

After helping twist White House arms, Sen. Ben

Nighthorse Campbell (D-CO) crowed to the *New York Times* that many environmentalists are "trust-fund babies who come out to hike in thousand-dollar equipment" with little sympathy for "blue-collar people on federal lands trying to make \$25,000 a year." He's hardly the first to defend the program by invoking its populist image. By now, however, big money has become the biggest beneficiary. Last fall, for example, the National Wildlife Federation analyzed grazing permits granted by the Bureau of Land Management in a report titled "Big Profits at a Big Price" that found the top 20 permit-holders (out of 18,000) use 14 percent of the land.

And these grazers are not Marlboro men. They include several billion-dollar corporations and such business moguls as J.R. Simplot, who is worth more than \$500 million, and George Gillett, owner of the Vail ski resort. The same concentration of wealth can be detected across the landscape of federal subsidies. Phillip Doe, a whistleblower at the Bureau of Reclamation, which supplies water for irrigation at discounts of 85 to 95 percent, says, "About 3 percent of the farms control about 30 percent of the land."

The flip-flop on subsidies has left many environmentalists wary of the White House's green intentions. But De Gennaro insists that these "subsidies are only one tiny piece of the overall package." And other issues, especially the energy tax, will be coming up fast. The "Earth Budget," which took several years to prepare since no one had before examined all the federal programs with a green eye, now provides a good baseline to judge Clinton's detailed spending proposals.

De Gennaro calls the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) operating budget, which drops 1 percent from last year, "a complete, fucking disaster." The EPA's operating budget upsets De Gennaro because it has risen by less than 5 percent since 1979, while the agency's workload has doubled with the passage of nine major environmental laws since then. But he applauds Clinton's reversal on energy policy, with nuclear research and development being slashed almost in half while renewables and conservation each go up by over 30 percent.

But the president may be investing his green hopes in the Interior Department instead. The budget includes great raises for the Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management, and a 65 percent hike for endangered species programs. The one brown splotch at Interior is a sharp cut in the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which has accrued a surplus of \$8 billion that Clinton specifically promised to start spending while out on the campaign trail. Instead, his team decided to keep this trust fund money in the bank to mask some of the real deficit.

To De Gennaro, two key questions

have emerged in the budget process. First, "Who's in charge?" Kathleen McGinty, head of the White House Office on Environmental Policy, Vice President Al Gore and EPA Chief Carol Browner "have played a good role in getting proposals formulated, but they've been left out a bit in the administration's dealings with Congress." Second, "How soon do you deal?" He offers the example of a recent move by the Treasury Department, which wrote Congress to say that ethanol would be exempted from the energy tax. McGinty's office learned about it on C-Span, and the Senate voted against the exemption. "They cut a deal before they needed to," De Gennaro argues.

But, as Public Citizen points out, the energy lobby is a formidable foe, since it has contributed almost \$40 million to congressional candidates over the past decade. On April 1, the Treasury Department released a detailed version of the administration's proposed tax that showed some fraying has occurred since Clinton's February announcement. The new proposal does exempt ethanol and methanol at the behest of the farm lobby, and it cuts the tax on home heating oil from the rate for petroleum to the one for natural gas, erasing any incentive to switch to the cleaner fuel.

An even bigger issue is: how will the tax be imposed? Clinton initially suggested that the tax be collected right at the wellhead, the minemouth or the dock, which gives industry an incentive to pare down on energy all the way down the line. But industry wants to push the tax much closer to the consumer. The April 1 version shows some slippage, and the wheeling and dealing will soon grow fierce as the House and Senate prepare their tax packages.

"Clinton has said no to the aluminum industry on an exemption from the energy tax. He has said no to most of the hydropower exemptions," says De Gennaro. "It's our job in the public interest movement to keep up the citizen pressure so that these are the politically useful things to do."

Will Nixon is an editor of *E* magazine.



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D I A L O G U E

Unite and conquer

A

s In These Times went to press, it was not clear if Serb nationalist forces in Bosnia would fully ratify the current Vance-Owen peace plan. If they do, it's an open question whether the agreement will prove meaningful. It is probably unwise to place bets.

Whatever the result, the damage in Bosnia has already been done. And however welcome a cease-fire would be—especially the lifting of the siege on Sarajevo—a deeply compromised settlement (even more compromised by concessions granted to the Bosnian Serbs by international mediators) does not justify all past mediation errors nor guarantee a new and just mediating posture. Most important, a few signatures on a peace plan cannot wipe away the vicious nationalist policies that have emerged throughout the region.

International mediation efforts in Bosnia have drifted along a course that stresses ethnic cantonization, based on negotiation with violent nationalist leaders. No policy—conscious or not—that supports ethnic division can ever bring

***No policy—
conscious
or not—
that supports
ethnic
division can
ever bring
peace and
stability to the
Balkans.***

**By Anthony Borden
and Zoran Pajic**

peace and stability.

In at least four ways, international mediation has directly served to crush progressive, multi-ethnic forces throughout the region. Most important is the arms embargo, which the United Nations imposed on the Bosnians in exchange for forceful, good-faith mediation efforts. It is now clear that virtually no country had faith in such efforts or would back them forcefully. As a result, the Bosnians have been left unarmed, and the international community is arguably complicit in genocide.

Second is partition of the region, officially launched two months before the fighting in Bosnia at the European Community (EC) Lisbon summit in February 1992 and now enshrined in Vance-Owen ethnic-based maps.

Severing Bosnia into ethnic enclaves is a war plan imposed by the extreme nationalist leaders from Serbia and Croatia, reportedly with direct pre-arrangement. Utterly contradicting Bosnia's centuries-old history of relative ethnic harmony, it is a recipe for conflict and population transfer, and arguably played a role in sparking the war, even as it is now seen as the only solution.

Third is the international community's recognition of Croatia as an independent state. Assigning Croatia this status came against the urging of the EC's Badinter Commission report on human-rights violations, and stands as the monumental diplomatic blunder of the conflict. The move alarmed Croatia's Serb minority—which cannot forget past Croatian atrocities—and set in motion an escalating cycle of ethnic unrest. Meanwhile, Macedonia—which the commission endorsed for official statehood—has not yet been awarded this status. And Bosnia was bounced out of the old Yugoslavia, without the substantial international protection the fragile new state obviously needed. These steps have fueled violent chauvinism on all sides.

Fourth is the "super-lawyer" negotiating approach. The international process has officially recognized only chauvinistic ethnic leaders, to the exclusion of alternative and opposition voices. This focus has debased the entire mediation process with ethnic-based solutions while legitimizing back home the people who were the cause of the problem in the first place. The sole, chimeric aim has been to sign a deal, however useless or unjust, and the continuity of the process has taken precedence over any impact on the ground.

A further problem with international mediation is that Western diplomats and journalists overwhelmingly and incorrectly portray all Bosnians as Muslims—thereby accepting the very tribal mentality that has led to the war.

Another pair of failures: Tuzla airport, which could be used for aid shipments, has languished unused for months and months. And the West has not adequately supported independent media outlets in Zagreb and Belgrade, essential to counter state propaganda and break the war psychology.

Why these missteps have occurred, and whether they add

up to an actual policy considered somewhere in Whitehall or Washington, is one of the most difficult and troubling questions of the conflict. Historians may someday uncover pro-Belgrade leanings, perhaps in the French and British governments. (Bonn's early blind fascination with Croatia—based on longstanding political, military and religious ties—was clear.) Or it may be that Britain simply has a special weakness for apartheid. More likely, however, the Western stance has been adopted out of traditional great-power political instincts, which have historically favored larger, ethnically homogeneous and ostensibly stable regimes, regardless of human-rights issues. Unfortunately, such an approach is no path to peace.

The political aim of any international intervention—diplomatic, economic or military—should be clear: reject ethnically defined territories. This would mean supporting—at whatever level they are found—

forces for democracy, tolerance and peace. And it would mean spending as much time and political capital nurturing forces for progressive civil politics as has been expended identifying individual culprits.

Such a policy would also mean utilizing the United Nations Protection Forces for the purpose their name implies: to protect—not Muslims, Croats or Serbs, but people, wherever they are, with the guarantee that they could become equal citizens in rebuilt states.

Negotiations on Bosnia should adopt as their aim not the country's effective division but the establishment of an international civil administration or transitional authority, with military backing as required. Such a strategy would not pre-judge a final settlement but would recognize that there can be no political settlement with only aggressive nationalist leaders at the table and the people under siege. The first step of such a policy would be to open Sarajevo immediately—by diplomacy if possible, by force if necessary—to provide fresh air to the structures of multicultural life still surviving there and to send a message of hope to civil forces throughout the region.

Hard realists, particularly those operating the U.N./European Community peace conference, reply brusquely that civic and democratic forces in the Balkans control no troops, have few or no seats in parliaments and, therefore, cannot affect the situation on the ground. They argue that the civic vision sounds nice but is vague and unworkable,

and that, anyway, after so much violence the people of Bosnia no longer want to live together. A liberal coexistence cannot be imposed, they say, and, in short, ethnic division is the only option.

Such assumptions are simply wrong. Ask the 80,000 Serbs still in Sarajevo. Ask the Serbs who recently refused to leave Tuzla, despite an arrangement for safe passage out brokered by the U.N. Ask the multi-ethnic group in the Bosnian Serb stronghold of Banja Luka, who have forced a small

Civic Forum to keep alive the flame of tolerance and coexistence. Consider the thousands of journalists throughout the region who have been fired because of their questionable loyalty to the ideology of ethnic-based states. Visit the peace groups in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia, or the offices of the independent Belgrade magazine *Vreme*, the fledgling *Hrvatski List* in Zagreb and the besieged *Oslobodjenje* in Sarajevo.

This is not an ethnic

A Muslim soldier plays the piano in Mostar, Bosnia.

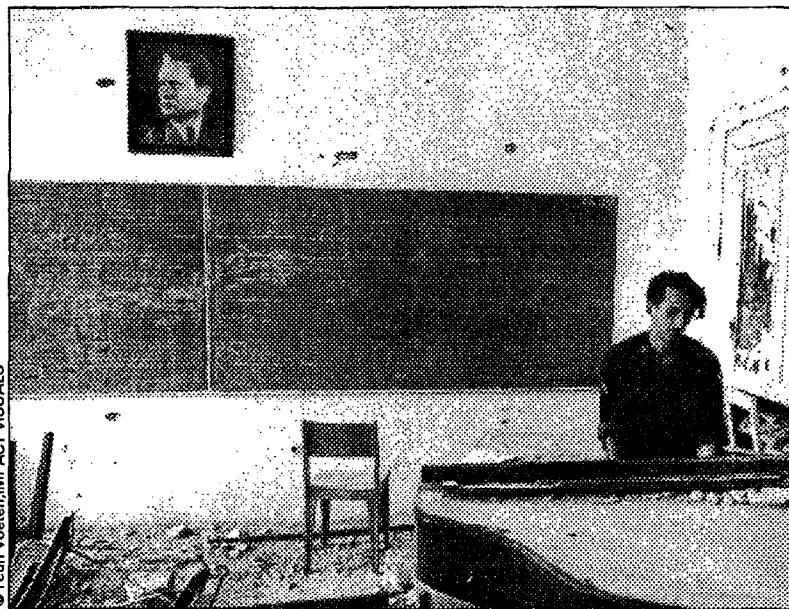
war about ancient animosities but a deliberately manufactured conflict fueled by vicious populist leaders. Ethnic division is seen as the only

option because the world has bought—and largely supported—the war-mongering propaganda of Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and Croatian President Franjo Tudjman. As a result, the international effort has arguably done more harm than good, while calling into question the very legitimacy of the entire system of collective security.

It is worth remembering that the Bosnian war broke out after a ceasefire was brokered in Croatia. Similarly, the scenarios for an expanded Balkan war hinge not on the direct spread of Bosnian fighting but on the extension of the violent ideologies that the fighting and the international community's approach have fueled.

The world is already deeply involved in the Balkan quagmire, and the road out will be difficult and long. But there is a multi-ethnic approach for the Balkans, and the sooner it is adopted the sooner it will be achieved.

Anthony Borden is director of the London-based Institute for War & Peace Reporting and editor of *War Report*, an independent briefing on the conflict. Zoran Pajic is professor of international law at Sarajevo University, visiting professor at the University of Essex and chair of the independent Experts Committee on the Crisis in Ex-Yugoslavia.



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E D U C A T I O N

Publish and perish

College and university administrators are calling for the separation of faculty dedicated to undergraduate teaching from those devoted to full-time research. They argue that establishing a reputation as a researcher does not leave sufficient time for teaching and curriculum development. And they also claim that the skills essential to scholarly publication—which determines tenure—have little to do with good teaching, and vice versa.

Separating research from teaching is a bad idea for students, teachers and researchers.

By Tony Smith

The incompatibility of teaching and research would be news to Plato and Aristotle, Aquinas and Hegel, Bertrand Russell and John Dewey, all of whom had a deep commitment to teaching. But even so, general social trends are pushing toward the separation of teaching and research.

In the corporate sector, the separation of the labor force into two distinct groups has been proceeding

for quite some time. A relatively small group of workers are encouraged to develop the special skills needed to produce high-profit commodities. Relatively high wages, benefits and job security purchase their loyalty to the company. The remainder of the workforce is only assigned relatively de-skilled tasks. Lowering their wages, eliminating their benefits and making their employment opportunities more precarious lead to great profit opportunities for the corporation.

The same economic logic is at work in universities. Researchers have become "cash cows" for universities, which can now earn royalties on patents based on their research. The less time they are distracted by students, the more money they can bring in. It is in the university's short-term interest to retain their loyalty, and freeing them from teaching is a "perk" that can be thrown their way. As the majority of the faculty are put into the pool of non-researching teachers, they become "de-

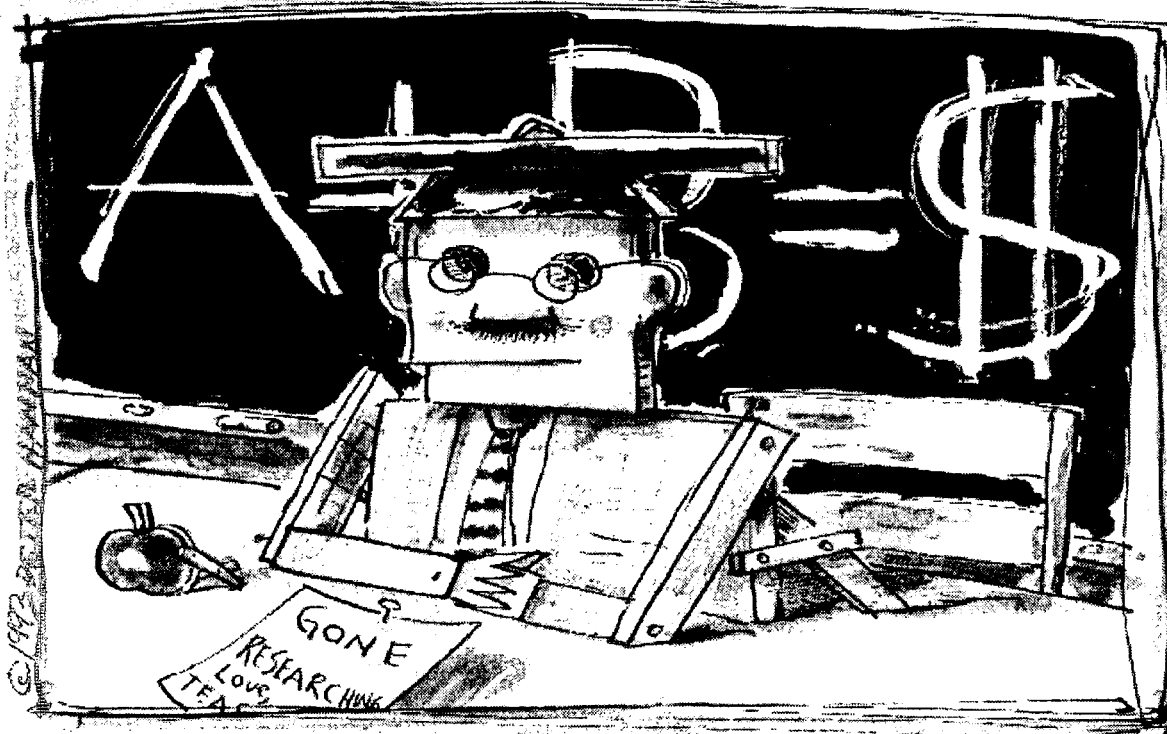
skilled" and easier to replace. The gap between their wages, benefits and job security and those of researchers increases.

The number of part-time faculty members has increased faster than full-time faculty and now makes up more than 38 percent of the total teaching force in higher education, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics of the Department of Education. The number of graduate students teaching part-time and the number of full-time temporary faculty have also increased significantly, thereby forcing researchers from teaching responsibilities.

These trends may benefit the university economically, but they do not benefit students. Students are now much more likely to have contact with vulnerable, overworked and inexperienced faculty. At the same time, the salaries of "star" scientists and engineers have soared, while more and more funds are devoted to support staff and state-of-the-art laboratories and equipment. Corporate and state funding has not increased enough to cover these higher research costs. Administrators have looked to tuition hikes to make up the difference. This is the main reason why tuition and fees increased at roughly twice the rate of inflation in the '80s.

Why should anyone outside of academia care about this development? For one thing, the tuition increases have begun to restrict access to higher education to mostly white, upper-middle-class students. If present trends continue, the higher education system will worsen the already horrific stratification in our society.

Second, researchers who teach are forced to develop the ability to translate what they are doing to the general public. As a result, they are in a much better position to contribute to the formation of a more scientifically and technically



informed public. Undergraduate teaching may also lead researchers to confront ethical and social issues posed by their research. But such issues can be ignored when researchers are off by themselves in their labs and offices. Proposals to insulate researchers make it more likely that their work will be dictated by corporate needs rather than public good.

Finally, the fate of higher education is connected with fundamental questions of public policy. Why are public universities so concerned with "cost-effectiveness"? The immediate reason has to do with budget pressures faced by state universities. California slashed 10 percent of its budget for state universities, and another 27 states have cuts planned in the immediate future. Of course, one factor behind this budget pressure is the recession. High unemployment reduces revenues from state income taxes, and consumers cannot make large purchases, which lessens sales tax revenues. All of this ultimately places pressures on the budgets of state universities.

Another factor, less often noted, is the decline in federal aid to states. After adjusting for inflation, federal grants to state and local governments declined 39 percent between 1980 and 1989. What explains this decline? The vast military buildup of the Reagan years helped create a massive federal deficit. This has been used as an excuse to squeeze other programs, such as support for state and local government. While outlays for the military have declined slightly in recent years, thus far a lower percentage of gross national product has been shifted to the civilian sector than after the end of either the Korean or the Vietnam War.

We also must remember that the U.S. has a regressive tax system that overburdens the poor, working and middle classes while inadequately taxing the wealthy and corporations. In the U.S. today, the richest 1 percent pay 7.6 percent of their income in state and local taxes, while the poorest 20 percent pay 13.8 percent. On the federal level, the U.S., of all the major industrial countries, imposes the lowest taxes on high-income earners relative to the taxes levied on average workers. In 1990, the tax burden of the richest 10 percent was reduced an average of 36 percent from what it would have been if 1977 federal tax laws were still in place.

With the richest 1 percent of U.S. households now owning almost 20 percent more wealth than the bottom 90 percent of families combined, concentrating state taxes on the poor and near poor simply does not raise enough money to provide adequately for social needs such as higher education.

The struggle against the separation of research and teaching is connected to much larger struggles for full employment policies, for the demilitarization of the economy and for federal and state taxation in which the wealthy and corporations pay their fair share. These struggles have not suddenly ceased with the election of a new administration. ◀

Tony Smith teaches philosophy at Iowa State University.

This article is part of a continuing series on education edited by Alex Molnar, a professor of education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The series, "Notes From the Back of the Class," covers a wide range of education-related issues. Contributions from readers are welcome. Manuscripts of no more than 1,000 words should be sent to Alex Molnar c/o In These Times, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.

IN THE ARTS

The man who would be king

D

ave is not the first movie to suggest that the man in the White House is a fraud. As far back as 1933, *Gabriel Over the White House* featured a chief executive who was essentially a crook. It took divine intervention to transform him into a statesman who saves the country from the Depression by, yikes, martial law.

The next year, in *The President Vanishes*, the man in the White House staged his own kidnapping in order to cut the fascists off at the pass. Sixty years later, as some fear another Great Depression looms, *Dave* illustrates that the guy who will save us doesn't even have to be elected to the office he occupies. Maybe, the movie suggests, it's better that he isn't.

In *Dave*, an ordinary citizen, Dave Kovic, is hired to stand in for President Bill Mitchell (both are played by Kevin Kline) on a routine security detail, and then

asked to extend his run.

It's a situation that recalls not only old political movies but that venerable swash-buckler, *The Prisoner of Zenda*, only this time it's the Constitution—not the King of Ruritania—being held prisoner, by White House Chief of Staff Bob Alexander (Frank Langella).

The character's name is no doubt meant to recall another Alexander, for he pulls an Al Haig when President Mitchell suffers a stroke *en flagrante delicto* with a perky blonde aide.

Alexander stashes the comatose prez in the White House basement and staves off the press. He has a scheme to put himself in the Oval Office and finds it easy enough to recruit Dave, by disguising his own ambition as concern for the stability of the country. (Even the best Americans are always easily fooled, it would appear, by appeals to national security.)

Dave is concerned that the vice president should rightfully take power. But Alexander convinces Dave the man is mentally unbalanced. Out of Dave's earshot, Alexander's real complaint about Vice President Gary Nance (played by Gandhi himself, Ben Kingsley) is that he is a "boy scout." Alexander contrives to send Nance on a trip to Africa while he concocts a scandal to remove the veep from office.

The line of succession is never discussed further than that, perhaps because in this movie about government, the U.S. Congress is virtually nonexistent. Members of Congress are so unpopular these days that they must seem fit only for villainous roles. Indeed, *Dave's* bad guy, Alexander, is a former senator. Besides, Hollywood has always found it difficult (outside of John Ford's cavalry movies) to comprehend an ensemble hero. There's not much star power in 500 bickering legislators. In this view of the body politic, the nation's fate rests in the hands of one man.

As Dave learns the ropes, his tutors drill him on the structure of the government with a flip chart and a pointer just like Ross Perot. The chart shows a big "you" at the top with a descending line of power that includes the courts and the Congress reporting to the president. ("A common mistake," my

There's no Washington gridlock in Dave, a Hollywood fable about politics unencumbered by the messy business of elections.

By Pat Dowell



Dave

Directed by Ivan Reitman



© 1993 Warner Bros.

cameos. The whole McLaughlin Group rates Dave-as-Mitchell on a political rejuvenation scale (McLaughlin and neocon Fred Barnes give him an eight, token liberal Eleanor Clift a three). The Prince of Darkness, Robert Novak, debates Michael Kinsley on the president's new style. Jay Leno cracks jokes about him, and Oliver Stone puts in an appearance with his own conspiracy theory on the changed man at the top.

Dave himself falls in love with President Mitchell's estranged wife (more shades of the *Prisoner of Zenda*), a role cast strongly enough, with Sigourney Weaver, to suggest a touch of Hillary Rodham Clinton. She figures him out, but decides to help him anyway. And who wouldn't?

Even the stony-faced Secret Service agent who guards him, played by Ving Rhames, is ultimately won over by Dave. Kevin Kline makes Dave the antithesis of politicians as

husband whispered to me as we watched the film.)

Gary Ross' script is as coy as a campaign promise, in the way it skirts political specifics. It affects a kind of non-denominational vagueness about Dave's positions on issues, as well as those of the prez he impersonates. The viewer never even learns the two characters' political parties.

The cards stack slightly to the right for the real President Mitchell, who wears Bush-style aviator glasses and talks law and order. But he doesn't want to veto a bill with homeless shelters in it, because that would make him "look like a prick" (something that's never bothered a Republican). He's also a "womanizer," a trait generally attributed to Dems.

Dave, his lookalike, leans ever so slightly left. His first act of rebellion against Bob Alexander is to overturn a veto of a "works" bill with shelters in it. Dave makes room for the bill's funding by calling in his accountant friend, Murray Blum (Charles Grodin), to spend a day with him cutting \$650 million out of the federal budget.

Over bratwurst the two decide the government will not continue to pay tardy defense contractors, and that it will ax a domestic auto promotion program. They also plan to make sure the savings earn interest in a passbook account. Murray, along the way, points out that if he ran his business as these books are kept, he'd be out of business.

Audiences at *Dave* give this line the biggest laugh, and even applause. It's clearly a page taken from Ross Perot's common-sense catechism. Dave, however, is much more of a bleeding heart than the Texas billionaire, and several real-life politicians who comment in the movie on the fictitious president seem to split along partisan lines. Democrats Paul Simon and Tom Harkin like his new jobs program, Republican Alan Simpson says he's out to lunch.

Dave features a couple dozen of these *Player*-like

we know them through the news. He's warm, unpretentious, a soft touch for a hard luck story, principled and yet not righteous.

And what does he do for a living? Before his stint in the White House, he bicycled to a storefront in Georgetown each morning to find people jobs at his little employment agency. After all his struggles to set the country on the right course, he disappears back into that storefront to start a grass-roots campaign for city councilman.

There's one thing you can say for this movie that ignores the electoral process: in the end, it doesn't heap contempt on politics but suggests that it's the way even a nice guy like Dave might choose to do good.

Watching *Dave*, which is expertly directed by Ivan Reitman, I couldn't help choking up a little over its sweet lack of cynicism and its wistfulness. Now I'm a pushover, I admit. I cry at Capra movies too, but as much for what they don't say as what they do. *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *Dave* both come out of a great well of sadness about the state of our government and a fear that we will never live up to our ideals.

Dave is a quick-fix fantasy born of self-imposed impotence, the sort of shortsighted utopian yearning that brings us closer each time we indulge it to right-wing solutions. In the end, it may be more destructive than cynicism. Even the America of Dave's (and our?) dreams, where everything works smoothly, is a suspect arrangement of happy stereotypes.

The melting pot is exemplified by a team effort in which the supportive woman offers encouragement and the trusty black guard is willing to take a bullet for his master, while the Jewish accountant keeps hold of the purse strings and a benevolent white man rules in their names. Let us hope this is not what The New Kind of Democrat means by multiculturalism.

IN PRINT

Top secrets

By Michael S. Sherry

“**C**orrupt, abusive and homosexual” is the *Chicago Tribune’s* accurate summary of how J. Edgar Hoover comes across in the new Anthony Summers biography and the recent *Frontline* profile based on it. Reading Summers’ book, one might conclude that the three characteristics are almost inevitably linked. *Official and Confidential* manages both to expose and to embody some of the most dreadful aspects of American Cold War culture.

Hoover, the FBI’s director for nearly 50 years before his death in 1972, trafficked in personal blackmail and anxieties about national security to forge a position of extraordinary influence in national government. According to Summers, there is scant evidence that Hoover cared a whit about crime, communism, perverts or national security.

To the contrary, he says, Hoover failed to act on a tip that Pearl Harbor would be attacked by the Japanese (then tried to make Franklin D. Roosevelt the fall guy for that disaster); was too enamored of and entrapped by leading Mafiosi to move against organized crime; enjoyed women’s clothes and kinky sex parties with other men (plus a long-time partnership with his assistant, Clyde Tolson); and hounded fascists or communists or others only when doing so played to popular frenzies, placated presidents or beefed up the secret files that enabled him to blackmail other powerful figures. No principled conservative worried about communist infiltration or moral rot could have been comfortable with Hoover as an ally.

In Summers’ hands, the most supercharged phase of his career came during John F. Kennedy’s presidency: he had the goods on the president’s womanizing, on his connections to organized crime and on his compromises of national secrets. Attorney General Robert Kennedy pressed Hoover to pursue big-time criminals associated with *both* Hoover and the Kennedys, and the upshot may have been (Summers is careful to hedge a little) the murder of Marilyn Monroe and possibly Kennedy himself, the latter presumably at the hands of Mafiosi enraged at the Kennedys’ double-dealing with them.

Things weren’t quite as glorious for Hoover later on. Despite their apparent ideological affinities, Hoover and

Richard Nixon got along miserably—to the point, Summers suggests, that the White House may have caused Hoover’s death, possibly by poisoning.

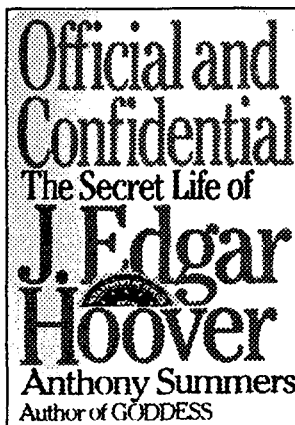
Though hardly anyone comes off well in Summers’ account, Hoover comes off worst. However smarmy or distasteful, people like Nixon and the Kennedys are presented as Hoover’s victims: when they acted badly, it was because they were flawed people. But Hoover, as Summers renders him, was bad in substantial part *because* he was homosexual. He was a petty martinet of a mincing, prissy sort who treated subordinates cruelly. He spied on countless Americans to cement his power as a blackmailer and to satisfy his prurient interests. He was capricious, hypocritical, supercilious, “narcissistic” and a “chatterbox,” indifferent to the larger issues of national life. He was a coward and a bully, afraid to join the armed forces during World War I but zealous in impugning the manhood of others.

What presumably made him all these things—and made these things define him as a homosexual—was that he was a mama’s boy. (Hoover lived with his mother until her death in 1938.) Relying on “leading psychiatrists” and “psychologists,” Summers argues that Hoover’s homosexuality represented a failure of manhood—a course taken in fear of and flight from women.

Summers thereby reconstructs the malicious ’50s notion of homosexuality as failed heterosexuality, a notion that also linked homosexuality to the paranoia and perversion associated with America’s ideological enemies, fascism and communism. According to one of the experts Summers quotes, the “combination of narcissism and paranoia” typical of homosexuals could lead to an authoritarian personality. “Hoover,” Summers adds, “would have made a perfect high-level Nazi.” Like Hoover, Heinrich Himmler “had a

weak father and was totally dependent on his mother.”

Here, unchanged by the passage of four decades, is the medical model of homosexuality as a pathology so pernicious as to be inimical to the nation’s very survival. Summers has taken the ’50s stereotype and turned it back against Hoover—without seeming to know that he has done so. It is an eerie portrait indeed, given that the ’50s marked the peak of the assault by medical and governmental authorities, including Hoover’s own FBI, on gay men and women. It’s almost as if homosexuals had only their own kind to blame, as if they were imprisoned in the closet primarily by their own closeted brothers.



**Official and Confidential:
The Secret Life of J. Edgar
Hoover**

By Anthony Summers
Putnam, 528 pp., \$25.95

This biography, so devoid of critical distance from its subject, makes me squeamish. It takes the same prurient interest in Hoover that Hoover took in others; employs the same kind of pseudo-scientific psychologizing popular when Hoover ruled; relies on the same sort of uncorroborated gossip—from anonymous sources, aggrieved ex-government agents, aging pals or wives of Mafia dons—that filled FBI files in Hoover's time. Some of that gossip may well be true—it's possible that Hoover dressed in drag and consorted with criminals—but this book inspires no confidence that Summers has verified his numerous accusations, some of which are based on slender evidence indeed.

Summers' tabloid instincts—he's also written a sensationalistic biography of Marilyn Monroe—produce a strangely skewed portrait of Hoover in other ways as well. He has little to say about Hoover's crusades against civil rights leaders and the American left as a whole. It may be that Hoover really cared little about such policies and far more about his own self-aggrandizement. But whatever his priorities, he stood at the center of the nation's political culture, and even the most stunted man operates within an ideological framework.

Summers, however, sticks stubbornly to personal rather than political explanations. Thus, for example, Hoover's intense racial prejudice "had deep-seated personal origins" in the persistent rumor "that Edgar himself had black blood in his veins." ("Early photographs of Hoover," Summers adds, "do have a Negroid look.")

Given his indifference to the systemic and ideological nature of power, Summers leaves an oddly incomplete picture of Hoover's abusive practices that ignores the vast run of their victims. If the abused were famous people, we get the morbid details about Hoover's treatment of them, and of their own misdeeds. Thus there is much—offered in prose that manages to stop just short of breathless—about crime bosses, the Kennedys and Marilyn Monroe, while those powerless in their time or forgotten in ours are barely mentioned.

If so many people knew Hoover was a closet queen, and had so many other reasons to despise him, then why was he tolerated at all? His power over them seems only part of the answer. His homosexuality may have been another, for it provided one way to blackmail the blackmailer: by threatening to expose him, others could counter his threats and channel his power toward their own designs. They did not always prevail, but it is fair to say that Hoover, for all the

power he wielded, rarely shaped (or, for that matter, ever really wanted to shape) major national policies.

National leaders, especially those of conservative coloration, have long tolerated homosexuals in high places (think of Roy Cohn and Terry Dolan) and in the armed forces, so long as they are closeted and conservative, not to say self-hating.

Debates over military showering aside, the issue isn't sex. Neither is it whether gay men and women have a place in our national institutions: of course they do, in part because as a practical matter it's impossible to screen them all out. The problem is that once prohibitions on homosexuals are lifted, they can't be controlled, coerced and manipulated.

Should gays now claim Hoover as one of their own? There is no convincing evidence that Hoover saw himself as homosexual—was gay-identified, in current parlance—even if he did sleep with Clyde Tolson, diddle with blond boys, dress in women's clothes and consult a psychiatrist in his torment. Nor does it make sense to claim Hoover, in retrospect, as a fellow victim—he had too much power for that.

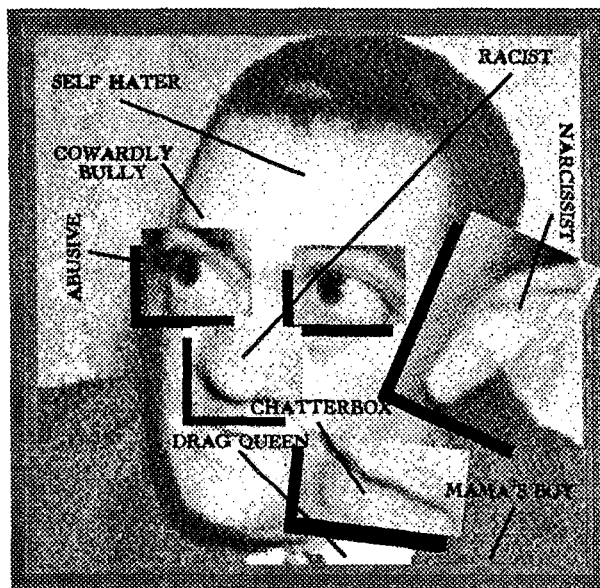
Yet gay folks are stuck with him, if only because he is now popularly identified as a homosexual in everything from the tabloids to PBS programs to

New Yorker cartoons. It makes little sense simply to dismiss the issue—to claim that Hoover's homosexuality was no more related to his evil than Nixon's heterosexuality was to his—for Hoover's sexuality (such as it was) *was* more important to his and the nation's fate.

Perhaps we can only say again that the most dangerous homosexual—to both self and others—is the self-hating, secretive one. That's not to agree with Summers' insinuation that Hoover's secret homosexuality was the font of his evil. Nor is it to assert a timeless value to being "out"—a notion that would be meaningless in a culture that didn't stigmatize queerness in the first place.

Rather, it is to repeat what gay activists have long asserted: in a culture that *does* so stigmatize, the struggle must continue for gay people to be out. Hoover's story needs to be rewritten—as one demonstrating the pathology not of homosexuality but of homophobia. And it needs to be wrested from the hands of someone like Summers.

Michael S. Sherry, a professor of history at Northwestern University, is the author of *The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon* (Yale University Press), which won the 1987 Bancroft Prize. He is finishing a book on the culture of Cold War America.



Crisis interventions

By Mitchell Stevens

As a medical problem AIDS is still seen only through a haze of unknowns; as a political crisis it defies even simple conceptions of justice; and as a taker of lives it follows no moral logic. Just as scientific knowledge of AIDS remains partial and disjointed, our intellectual picture of AIDS is still fragmentary. Two recent volumes, *Personal Dispatches* and *Writing AIDS*, each in different ways bear witness to our frustratingly limited understanding of the political and cultural ramifications of the crisis. Facing a multifaceted disaster whose profundities only uncomfortably fit into the clean logic of the essay form, the 31 authors represented in these texts struggle to uncover the varied personal and cultural meanings of the pandemic.

The writers in *Personal Dispatches* portray small slices of their own experiences with the disease. Editor John Preston, a writer of popular gay fiction and pornography, has in other volumes compiled gay men's bittersweet recollections of childhood and their impressions of their current hometowns; his selections in this volume tug at rawer pieces of contemporary gay life.

Craig Rowland's "The Examination Table," for example, presents an account, written in the form of a diary, of its author's search for adequate care of his HIV-carrying body in the early days both of his condition and the broader epidemic. Rowland tells of being herded around between various specialists who could tell him only that his immune system "was, inexplicably, a mess." In the "old days" of the early '80s, Rowland notes, "[e]verybody was maneuvering in the dark instead of the murky dusk we've broken into today."

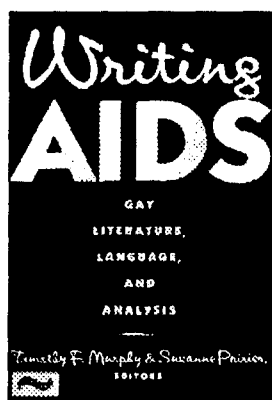
Rowland's broken diary travels quickly through a series of bad news sessions with doctors, encounters with gruff nursing staffers and dead-end treatment routines. Yet Rowland reconstructs these ordeals, through his writing, so that he comes out empowered in the end: "Since I don't subscribe to a traditional God ... I'm not interested in relying on bibles. ... Instead, I've learned to believe in my own choices."

He's learned, for one thing, not to trust a medical establishment with more questions than answers about AIDS. Rowland ends his essay, able-bodied, with a final entry dated "November 1988," taking leave of yet another medical appointment, heading "into the First Avenue rush hour. Unlike years ago, the colors, noises and shapes are clearly defined as I sprint down the street."

Other essays are equally personal, if not so filled with emancipatory anger. Marea Murray's "All Too Familiar" is a reflection of its author's experiences as a caregiver and friend to people with AIDS, more than 20 of whom are now dead from the disease. A San Francisco social worker, Murray poignantly discusses the near-crippling emotions she experiences both in her professional work and in her labors as a friend. She notes the numerous times her car has been vandalized because of its "Fight AIDS, not people with AIDS" bumper sticker. "It's not supposed to be like this," she concludes, "but it is."

In all, *Personal Dispatches* comprises 18 tales of loss. Journalist Michael Bronski writes about the challenge of reading and writing countless obituaries for those lost to AIDS; novelist Edmund White makes an impressionistic chronicle of many artists who have died in the epidemic; Andrew Holleran shows how fear has become the new hallmark of gay sex—replacing the ecstasy and freedom of the '70s. *Personal Dispatches* reads like a kind of AIDS devotional: the essays are short, written with emotion and often end with some measured mixture of desperation and hope.

Murphy and Poirier's *Writing AIDS* attempts a broader intellectual treatment of the disaster. A collection of scholarly essays that analyze various media representations of the epidemic, the volume helps to reveal how storytellers both within the gay community and the wider culture have attempted to impose coherent, meaningful narratives on the still barely knowable crisis—and at what political and moral expense those narratives have come.



Writing AIDS: Gay Literature, Language, and Analysis

Edited by Timothy F. Murphy and Suzanne Poirier

Columbia University Press

352 pp., \$29.50

Personal Dispatches: Writers Confront AIDS

Edited by John Preston.

St. Martin's Press

183 pp., \$17.95



Some of the essays are remarkable. In "The Language of War in AIDS Discourse" historian Michael S. Sherry soberly notes that the war metaphor has been a popular device for framing a broad range of crises in post-World War II America. We have, after all, waged "wars" on poverty, "wars" on drugs, against abortion and urban decay. Sherry's articulate essay helps remind us how even the most seemingly radical elements of AIDS politics and rhetoric echo the narrative forms of the dominant culture.

Peter Bowen's "AIDS 101" is an account of one teacher's

struggle to vivify AIDS in the college classroom, and offers something of a deconstruction of mainstream understandings of the disease. Developing a curriculum in English composition as a study of representations of AIDS, Miller was able to both experiment with activist pedagogy and to fruitfully "read" his student's work as an example of how meanings of the illness are formed.

While Poirier's cryptic introduction does little to conceptually unite the essays in the volume, it does lend their common task of interpreting interpretations of AIDS a kind of extra-analytical imperative: the book, after all, is a contribution to the fight against the disease. Though Poirier frames the essays as part and parcel of the larger project of making adequate sense of the pandemic, she nevertheless is at a loss to articulate in just what direction such sense might be pursued.

Not that anyone, at this point, could be expected to know. Indeed, it's striking that several different authors in *Writing AIDS* make almost wistful reference to *Longtime Companion* (1990), one of the few feature-length fictions of life with AIDS that ends happily. The film begins in the halcyon days of gay sexual freedom, carries its characters through the last decade's proliferation of illness and death, and finishes with the bodily return of all the friends and loved ones who've been lost.

Unabashedly romantic, even hokey in its tearjerking final scenes, *Longtime Companion* is nevertheless seductive because it offers what few writers or scholars of AIDS have dared proffer. The film's got a "big picture," a "whole story," with its necessary resolution of conflict, its closure, its end. Since, off-screen, the end of AIDS remains inimitably elusive, bits and pieces of narrative and analysis will have to suffice. Even in their successes, *Personal Dispatches* and *Writing AIDS* demonstrate how atomistic and incomplete our understandings of the pandemic remain.

◀ Mitchell Stevens has written for *Art in America*, the *New Art Examiner* and the *American Journal of Sociology*.

Continued from page 40

What's changed since then is not so much the nature of Mormon belief or behavior—even back then, polygamy was more a myth than a reality—but the worldly prestige of the church.

The Waco attacks were not a clear-cut case of religious persecution—even before the initial raid, there were reports of child abuse and weapons violations—but they do come awfully close. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) was particularly worried that Koresh, like some Ice-T of the Apocalypse, preached “certain doctrines hostile to law enforcement and particularly the ATF,” according to recently released affidavits.

And immediately prior to the original raid, the *Waco Tribune-Herald* began a series about the Davidians, criticizing them for both child abuse and “eccentric religious beliefs.” A February 27 editorial demanded action by the authorities—which, of course, came the very next day. Would the federal government have launched the equivalent of a military assault on a

group of gun-toting Episcopalians?

Look: if we're going to claim religious pluralism, let's mean it. There is no objective way to distinguish “good” religion from “bad,” no logical way to claim that notions of the Rapture, Transubstantiation or the Virgin Birth are somehow more rational than beliefs in the divinity of David Koresh. Perhaps one of the reasons so many Americans lash out at religious outsiders is that there is nothing other than their own irrational faith to distinguish their beliefs from those of the religious “nuts.”

We don't have to like those we disagree with—I can't say I'm terribly fond of the Born-Again bullies who blockade the abortion clinics I sometimes go out to defend; and Koresh is not, even by my spacious standards, a family-values kind of guy. But that's no reason to dismiss the horrors of Waco as a bad joke. When I watch the politicians and the press circle the wagons, drawing ever more tightly the boundaries of respectability, I shudder.

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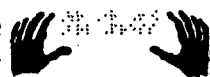
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I N T H E E N D

Branch Apocalypse

By David Futrelle

Too many Americans—tired of waiting, eager for closure—reacted to the final conflagration at the Branch Davidian compound in Waco less with horror than with a sigh of relief. Now all they have to wait for are the TV movies, at least one of which is already finishing up production. The officials most responsible for the tragedy—from Janet Reno on down—burst forth almost at once with a rash of hastily conceived, and often contradictory, rationalizations—the “fatigue” of federal negotiators, the high cost of the siege, unproven (and now probably unprovable) cases of “baby beating.”

No sooner had the new attorney general “accepted responsibility” for the disaster than she adroitly passed the buck to “madman” David Koresh. Politicians, and more than a few journalists, fell over themselves seconding (and embroidering upon) these dubious claims, cheering Reno’s supposed courage and gratuitously demonizing the already thoroughly demonized “wacko in Waco.” They needn’t have bothered to rationalize so creatively: polls showed that a substantial majority of Americans already supported the government’s actions.

The events in Waco, and even more so the blasé public reaction to them, are sadly symptomatic of America’s ambivalence toward its own much vaunted tradition of religious pluralism. According to historian R. Laurence Moore, American religious “outsiders” have always had a tenuous relationship with the self-described mainstream. “Civil libertarians have consistently insisted on Ameri-

ca’s sacred duty to make the country a place of unprecedented religious tolerance,” Moore writes in his provocative book *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans*. “Faced, however, with the realities of religious pluralism—multiplying sects and excessive fervor for seemingly bizarre religious tenets—they have reacted with something short of enthusiasm.” Thomas Jefferson and the other founding fathers, moderate deists, hoped that erecting a wall between Church and State would allow Americans to “move ... toward a sensible and non-dividing religious center.”

Fat chance. It’s not just that the American landscape today is dotted with cults as seemingly dotty as the Davidians—the Scientologists; the Moonies; the followers of Elizabeth Clare Prophet (good name, that) holed up on a ranch in Montana, waiting for a nuclear Armageddon.

In fact, a great number of Americans hold beliefs that are far outside what we generally consider the norm—many of them adherents of complex and vaguely paranoid cosmologies of an impending apocalypse. Ronald Reagan, you may recall, enjoyed chatting after dinner about the End Times with his fundamentalist friends. But he’s not the only one: some 60 percent of Americans, by some polls (and more than 50 percent of those with college educations), believe in the Second Coming of Christ. When you see bumper stickers reading “Warning: If the Rapture Occurs This Car Will Be Driverless,” don’t assume the person behind the wheel is joking.

Religious outsiderhood is no aberration; it’s as American as violence and apple pie. And the Branch Davidians are not, of course, the first religious grouping in America to face attack and vilification from the outside world. The Mormons, now as respectable as Donny and Marie, were once denounced in terms strikingly similar to those used to describe Koresh and his followers today. According to one 1842 “exposé,” Mormons practiced “infidelity, deism, atheism, lying, deception, blasphemy, debauchery, lasciviousness, bestiality, madness, fraud, plunder, larceny,

burglary, robbery, perjury, fornication, adultery, rape, incest, arson, treason and murder.” Joseph Smith, like Koresh, claimed to be “persecuted the worst of any man on earth.”



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